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POEMS.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S

POETICAL WORKS.

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a.c.

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POEMS BEFORE CONGRESS.

PREFACE.

THESE poems were written under the pressure of the events they indicate, after a residence in Italy of so many years that the present triumph of great principles is heightened to the writer's feelings by the disastrous issue of the last movement, witnessed from "Casa Guidi Windows" in 1849. Yet, if the verses should appear to English readers too pungently rendered to admit of a patriotic respect to the English sense of things, I will not excuse myself on such grounds, nor on the ground of my attachment to the Italian people and my admiration of their heroic constancy and union. What I have written has simply been written because I love truth and justice *quand même*,—"more than Plato" and Plato's country, more than Dante and Dante's country, more even than Shakespeare and Shakespeare's country.

And if patriotism means the flattery of one's nation in every case, then the patriot, take it as you please, is merely the courtier which I am not, though I have written "Napoleon III. in Italy." It is time to limit the significance of certain terms, or to enlarge the significance of certain things. Nationality is excellent in its place; and the instinct of self-love is the root of a man, which will develope into sacrificial virtues. But all the virtues are means and uses; and, if we hinder their tendency to growth and expansion, we both destroy them as virtues, and degrade them to that rankest species of corruption reserved for the most noble organizations. For instance,—non-intervention in the affairs of neighbouring states is a high political virtue;

but non-intervention does not mean, passing by on the other side when your neighbour falls among thieves,—or Phariseeism would recover it from Christianity. Freedom itself is virtue, as well as privilege; but freedom of the seas does not mean piracy, nor freedom of the land, brigandage; nor freedom of the senate, freedom to cudgel a dissident member; nor freedom of the press, freedom to calumniate and lie. So, if patriotism be a virtue indeed, it cannot mean an exclusive devotion to our country's interests,—for that is only another form of devotion to personal interests, family interests, or provincial interests, all of which, if not driven past themselves, are vulgar and immoral objects. Let us put away the Little Pedlingtonism unworthy of a great nation, and too prevalent among us. If the man who does not look beyond this natural life is of a somewhat narrow order, what must be the man who does not look beyond his own frontier or his own sea?

I confess that I dream of the day when an English statesman shall arise with a heart too large for England; having courage in the face of his countrymen to assert of some suggested policy, —"This is good for your trade; this is necessary for your domination: but it will vex a people hard by; it will hurt a people farther off; it will profit nothing to the general humanity: therefore, away with it!—it is not for you or for me." When a British minister dares speak so, and when a British public applauds him speaking, then shall the nation be glorious, and her praise, instead of exploding from within, from loud civic mouths, come to her from without, as all worthy praise must, from the alliances she has fostered and the populations she has saved.

And poets who write of the events of that time, shall not need to justify themselves in prefaces, for ever so little jarring of the national sentiment, imputable to their rhymes.

ROME, *February*, 1860.

POEMS BEFORE CONGRESS.

NAPOLEON III. IN ITALY.

I.

Emperor, Emperor!
From the centre to the shore,
  From the Seine back to the Rhine,
Stood eight millions up and swore
  By their manhood's right divine
So to elect and legislate,
  This man should renew the line
Broken in a strain of fate
And leagued kings at Waterloo,
When the people's hands let go.
    Emperor
    Evermore.

II.

With a universal shout
They took the old regalia out
From an open grave that day;
  From a grave that would not close,
Where the first Napoleon lay
  Expectant, in repose,
As still as Merlin, with his conquering face
  Turned up in its unquenchable appeal
To men and heroes of the advancing race,—
  Prepared to set the seal
Of what has been on what shall be.
    Emperor
    Evermore.

III.

The thinkers stood aside
  To let the nation act.
  Some hated the new-constituted fact
Of empire, as pride treading on their pride.
Some quailed, lest what was poisonous in the past
  Should graft itself in that Druidic bough
    On this green Now.
Some cursed, because at last
The open heavens to which they had looked in vain
For many a golden fall of marvellous rain
Were closed in brass; and some
Wept on because a gone thing could not come;

And some were silent, doubting all things for
That popular conviction,—evermore
Emperor.

IV.

That day I did not hate
Nor doubt, nor quail nor curse.
I, reverencing the people, did not bate
My reverence of their deed and oracle,
Nor vainly prate
Of better and of worse
Against the great conclusion of their will.
And yet, O voice and verse,
Which God set in me to acclaim and sing
Conviction, exaltation, aspiration,
We gave no music to the patent thing,
Nor spared a holy rhythm to throb and swim
About the name of him
Translated to the sphere of domination
By democratic passion!
I was not used, at least,
Nor can be, now or then,
To stroke the ermine beast
On any kind of throne,
(Though builded by a nation for its own),
And swell the surging choir for kings of men—
'Emperor
Evermore.'

V.

But now, Napoleon, now
That, leaving far behind the purple throng
Of vulgar monarchs, thou
Tread'st higher in thy deed
Than stair of throne can lead,
To help in the hour of wrong
The broken hearts of nations to be strong,—
Now, lifted as thou art
To the level of pure song,
We stand to meet thee on these Alpine snows!
And while the palpitating peaks break out
Ecstatic from somnambular repose
With answers to the presence and the shout,
We, poets of the people, who take part
With elemental justice, natural right,
Join in our echoes also, nor refrain.
We meet thee, O Napoleon, at this height
At last, and find thee great enough to praise.
Receive the poet's chrism, which smells beyond
The priest's, and pass thy ways;—
An English poet warns thee to maintain
God's word, not England's:—let His truth be true
And all men liars! with His truth respond
To all men's lie. Exalt the sword and smite
On that long anvil of the Apennine
Where Austria forged the Italian chain in view
Of seven consenting nations, sparks of fine

Admonitory light,
Till men's eyes wink before convictions new.
Flash in God's justice to the world's amaze,
Sublime Deliverer!—after many days
Found worthy of the deed thou art come to do—
Emperor
Evermore.

VI.

But Italy, my Italy,
Can it last, this gleam?
Can she live and be strong,
Or is it another dream
Like the rest we have dreamed so long?
And shall it, must it be,
That after the battle-cloud has broken
She will die off again
Like the rain,
Or like a poet's song
Sung of her, sad at the end
Because her name is Italy,—
Die and count no friend?
Is it true,—may it be spoken,—
That she who has lain so still,
With a wound in her breast,
And a flower in her hand,
And a grave-stone under her head,
While every nation at will
Beside her has dared to stand,

And flout her with pity and scorn,
  Saying, 'She is at rest,
She is fair, she is dead,
And, leaving room in her stead
To Us who are later born,
  This is certainly best!'
Saying, 'Alas, she is fair,
Very fair, but dead,—give place,
And so we have room for the race.'
—Can it be true, be true,
That she lives anew?
That she rises up at the shout of her sons,
  At the trumpet of France,
And lives anew?—is it true
  That she has not moved in a trance,
As in Forty-eight?
  When her eyes were troubled with blood
Till she knew not friend from foe,
Till her hand was caught in a strait
Of her cerement and baffled so
  From doing the deed she would;
And her weak foot stumbled across
The grave of a king,
And down she dropt at heavy loss,
  And we gloomily covered her face and said,
'We have dreamed the thing;
  She is not alive, but dead.'

VII.

Now, shall we say
Our Italy lives indeed?
And if it were not for the beat and bray
Of drum and trump of martial men,
Should we feel the underground heave and strain,
Where heroes left their dust as a seed
Sure to emerge one day?
And if it were not for the rhythmic march
Of France and Piedmont's double hosts,
Should we hear the ghosts
Thrill through ruined aisle and arch,
Throb along the frescoed wall,
Whisper an oath by that divine
They left in picture, book, and stone,
That Italy is not dead at all?
Ay, if it were not for the tears in our eyes,
These tears of a sudden passionate joy,
Should we see her arise
From the place where the wicked are overthrown,
Italy, Italy? loosed at length
From the tyrant's thrall,
Pale and calm in her strength?
Pale as the silver cross of Savoy
When the hand that bears the flag is brave,
And not a breath is stirring, save
What is blown
Over the war-trump's lip of brass,
Ere Garibaldi forces the pass!

VIII.

Ay, it is so, even so.
Ay, and it shall be so.
Each broken stone that long ago
She flung behind her as she went
In discouragement and bewilderment
Through the cairns of Time, and missed her way
Between to-day and yesterday,
Up springs a living man.
And each man stands with his face in the light
Of his own drawn sword,
Ready to do what a hero can.
Wall to sap, or river to ford,
Cannon to front, or foe to pursue,
Still ready to do, and sworn to be true,
As a man and a patriot can.
Piedmontese, Neapolitan,
Lombard, Tuscan, Romagnole,
Each man's body having a soul,—
Count how many they stand,
All of them sons of the land,
Every live man there
Allied to a dead man below,
And the deadest with blood to spare
To quicken a living hand
In case it should ever be slow.
Count how many they come
To the beat of Piedmont's drum,

With faces keener and grayer
Than swords of the Austrian slayer,
All set against the foe.
'Emperor
Evermore.'

IX.

Out of the dust, where they ground them,
Out of the holes, where they dogged them,
Out of the hulks, where they wound them
In iron, tortured and flogged them;
Out of the streets, where they chased them,
Taxed them, and then bayonetted them,—
Out of the homes, where they spied on them,
(Using their daughters and wives),
Out of the church, where they fretted them,
Rotted their souls and debased them,
Trained them to answer with knives,
Then cursed them all at their prayers!—
Out of cold lands, not theirs,
Where they exiled them, starved them, lied on them;
Back they come like a wind, in vain
Cramped up in the hills, that roars its road
The stronger into the open plain;
Or like a fire that burns the hotter
And longer for the crust of cinder,
Serving better the ends of the potter;
Or like a restrained word of God,
Fulfilling itself by what seems to hinder.

'Emperor
Evermore.'

X.

Shout for France and Savoy!
Shout for the helper and doer.
Shout for the good sword's ring,
Shout for the thought still truer.
Shout for the spirits at large
Who passed for the dead this spring,
Whose living glory is sure.
Shout for France and Savoy!
Shout for the council and charge!
Shout for the head of Cavour;
And shout for the heart of a King
That's great with a nation's joy!
Shout for France and Savoy!

XI.

Take up the child, Macmahon, though
Thy hand be red
From Magenta's dead,
And riding on, in front of the troop,
In the dust of the whirlwind of war
Through the gate of the city of Milan, stoop
And take up the child to thy saddle-bow,
Nor fear the touch as soft as a flower of his smile
as clear as a star!
Thou hast a right to the child, we say,

Since the women are weeping for joy as they
Who, by thy help and from this day,
  Shall be happy mothers indeed.
They are raining flowers from terrace and roof:
  Take up the flower in the child.
While the shout goes up of a nation freed
  And heroically self-reconciled,
Till the snow on that peaked Alp aloof
Starts, as feeling God's finger anew,
And all those cold white marble fires
Of mounting saints on the Duomo-spires
  Flicker against the Blue.
    'Emperor
    Evermore.'

XII.

    Ay, it is He,
Who rides at the King's right hand!
Leave room to his horse and draw to the side,
  Nor press too near in the ecstasy
Of a newly delivered impassioned land:
  He is moved, you see,
He who has done it all.
They call it a cold stern face;
  But this is Italy
Who rises up to her place!—
For this he fought in his youth,
Of this he dreamed in the past;
The lines of the resolute mouth

Tremble a little at last.
Cry, he has done it all!
'Emperor
Evermore.'

XIII.

It is not strange that he did it,
Though the deed may seem to strain
To the wonderful, unpermitted,
For such as lead and reign.
But he is strange, this man:
The people's instinct found him
(A wind in the dark that ran
Through a chink where was no door),
And elected him and crowned him
Emperor
Evermore.

XIV.

Autocrat? let them scoff,
Who fail to comprehend
That a ruler incarnate of
The people, must transcend
All common king-born kings.
These subterranean springs
A sudden outlet winning
Have special virtues to spend
The people's blood runs through him,
Dilates from head to foot,

Creates him absolute,
And from this great beginning
Evokes a greater end
To justify and renew him—
Emperor
Evermore.

XV.

What! did any maintain
That God or the people (think!)
Could make a marvel in vain?—
Out of the water-jar there,
Draw wine that none could drink?
Is this a man like the rest,
This miracle, made unaware
By a rapture of popular air,
And caught to the place that was best?
You think he could barter and cheat
As vulgar diplomates use,
With the people's heart in his breast?
Prate a lie into shape
Lest truth should cumber the road;
Play at the fast and loose
Till the world is strangled with tape;
Maim the soul's complete
To fit the hole of a toad;
And filch the dogman's meat
To feed the offspring of God?

XVI.

Nay, but he, this wonder,
He cannot palter nor prate,
Though many around him and under,
With intellects trained to the curve,
Distrust him in spirit and nerve
Because his meaning is straight.
Measure him ere he depart
With those who have governed and led;
Larger so much by the heart,
Larger so much by the head.
Emperor
Evermore.

XVII.

He holds that, consenting or dissident,
Nations must move with the time;
Assumes that crime with a precedent
Doubles the guilt of the crime;
—Denies that a slaver's bond,
Or a treaty signed by knaves,
(*Quorum magna pars* and beyond
Was one of an honest name)
Gives an inexpugnable claim
To abolish men into slaves.
Emperor
Evermore.

XVIII.

He will not swagger nor boast
  Of his country's meeds, in a tone
Missuiting a great man most
  If such should speak of his own;
Nor will he act, on her side,
  From motives baser, indeed,
Than a man of a noble pride
  Can avow for himself at need;
Never, for lucre or laurels,
  Or custom, though such should be rife,
Adapting the smaller morals
  To measure the larger life.
He, though the merchants persuade,
  And the soldiers are eager for strife,
Finds not his country in quarrels
  Only to find her in trade,—
While still he accords her such honour
  As never to flinch for her sake
Where men put service upon her,
  Found heavy to undertake
And scarcely like to be paid:
Believing a nation may act
  Unselfishly—shiver a lance
(As the least of her sons may, in fact)
  And not for a cause of finance.
    Emperor
    Evermore.

XIX.

Great is he,
Who uses his greatness for all.
His name shall stand perpetually
As a name to applaud and cherish,
Not only within the civic wall
For the loyal, but also without
For the generous and free.
Just is he,
Who is just for the popular due
As well as the private debt.
The praise of nations ready to perish
Fall on him,—crown him in view
Of tyrants caught in the net,
And statesmen dizzy with fear and doubt!
And though, because they are many,
And he is merely one,
And nations selfish and cruel
Heap up the inquisitor's fuel
To kill the body of high intents,
And burn great deeds from their place,
Till this, the greatest of any,
May seem imperfectly done;
Courage, whoever circumvents!
Courage, courage, whoever is base!
The soul of a high intent, be it known,
Can die no more than any soul
Which God keeps by Him under the throne;

And this, at whatever interim,
Shall live, and be consummated
Into the being of deeds made whole.
Courage, courage! happy is he,
Of whom (himself among the dead
And silent), this word shall be said:
—That he might have had the world with him,
But chose to side with suffering men,
And had the world against him when
He came to deliver Italy.
Emperor
Evermore.

THE DANCE.

I.

You remember down at Florence our Cascine,
  Where the people on the feast-days walk and drive,
And, through the trees, long-drawn in many a green
    way,
  O'er-roofing hum and murmur like a hive,
  The river and the mountains look alive?

II.

You remember the piazzone there, the stand-place
  Of carriages a-brim with Florence Beauties,
Who lean and melt to music as the band plays,
  Or smile and chat with some one who a-foot is,
  Or on horseback, in observance of male duties?

III.

'Tis so pretty, in the afternoons of summer,
So many gracious faces brought together!
Call it rout, or call it concert, they have come here,
In the floating of the fan and of the feather,
To reciprocate with beauty the fine weather.

IV.

While the flower-girls offer nosegays (because *they* too
Go with other sweets) at every carriage-door;
Here, by shake of a white finger, signed away to
Some next buyer, who sits buying score on score,
Piling roses upon roses evermore.

V.

And last season, when the French camp had its station
In the meadow-ground, things quickened and grew gayer
Through the mingling of the liberating nation
With this people; groups of Frenchmen everywhere,
Strolling, gazing, judging lightly—'who was fair.'

VI.

Then the noblest lady present took upon her
To speak nobly from her carriage for the rest;
'Pray these officers from France to do us honour
By dancing with us straightway.' The request
Was gravely apprehended as addressed.

VII.

And the men of France bareheaded, bowing lowly,
Led out each a proud signora to the space
Which the startled crowd had rounded for them—slowly,
Just a touch of still emotion in his face,
Not presuming, through the symbol, on the grace.

VIII.

There was silence in the people: some lips trembled,
But none jested. Broke the music, at a glance:
And the daughters of our princes, thus assembled,
Stepped the measure with the gallant sons of France,
Hush! it might have been a Mass, and not a dance.

IX.

And they danced there till the blue that overskied us
Swooned with passion, though the footing seemed sedate;
And the mountains, heaving mighty hearts beside us,
Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to dilate,
And touch the holy stone where Dante sate.

X.

Then the sons of France bareheaded, lowly bowing,
Led the ladies back where kinsmen of the south
Stood, received them; till, with burst of overflowing
Feeling—husbands, brothers, Florence's male youth,
Turned, and kissed the martial strangers mouth to mouth.

XI.

And a cry went up, a cry from all that people!
—You have heard a people cheering, you suppose,
For the Member, mayor . . with chorus from the steeple?
This was different: scarce as loud perhaps, (who knows?)
For we saw wet eyes around us ere the close.

XII.

And we felt as if a nation, too long borne in
By hard wrongers,—comprehending in such attitude
That God had spoken somewhere since the morning,
That men were somehow brothers, by no platitude,—
Cried exultant in great wonder and free gratitude.

A TALE OF VILLAFRANCA.

TOLD IN TUSCANY.

I.

My little son, my Florentine,
Sit down beside my knee,
And I will tell you why the sign
Of joy which flushed our Italy,
Has faded since but yesternight;
And why your Florence of delight
Is mourning as you see.

II.

A great man (who was crowned one day)
Imagined a great Deed:
He shaped it out of cloud and clay,
He touched it finely till the seed
Possessed the flower: from heart and brain
He fed it with large thoughts humane,
To help a people's need.

III.

He brought it out into the sun—
They blessed it to his face:
'O great pure Deed, that hast undone
So many bad and base!
O generous Deed, heroic Deed,
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,
Deliver by God's grace.'

IV.

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north and south,
Rose up in wrath and fear,
And cried, protesting by one mouth,
'What monster have we here?
A great Deed at this hour of day?
A great just Deed—and not for pay?
Absurd,—or insincere.'

V.

'And if sincere, the heavier blow
In that case we shall bear,
For where's our blessed 'status quo,'
Our holy treaties, where,—
Our rights to sell a race, or buy,
Protect and pillage, occupy,
And civilize despair?'

VI.

Some muttered that the great Deed meant
A great pretext to sin;
And others, the pretext, so lent,
Was heinous (to begin).
Volcanic terms of 'great' and 'just'?
Admit such tongues of flame, the crust
Of time and law falls in.

VII.

A great Deed in this world of ours?
Unheard of the pretence is:
It threatens plainly the great Powers;
Is fatal in all senses.
A just Deed in the world?—call out
The rifles! be not slack about
The national defences.

VIII.

And many murmured, 'From this source
What red blood must be poured!'
And some rejoined, ''Tis even worse;
What red tape is ignored!'
All cursed the Doer for an evil
Called here, enlarging on the Devil,—
There, monkeying the Lord!

IX.

Some said, it could not be explained,
  Some, could not be excused;
And others, 'Leave it unrestrained,
  Gehenna's self is loosed.'
And all cried, 'Crush it, maim it, gag it!
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it ragged,
  Truncated and traduced!'

X.

But HE stood sad before the sun,
  (The peoples felt their fate).
'The world is many,—I am one;
  My great Deed was too great.
God's fruit of justice ripens slow:
Men's souls are narrow; let them grow.
  My brothers, we must wait.'

XI.

The tale is ended, child of mine,
  Turned graver at my knee.
They say your eyes, my Fiorentine,
  Are English: it may be:
And yet I've marked as blue a pair
Following the doves across the square
  At Venice by the sea.

XII.

Ah child! ah child! I cannot say
A word more. You conceive
The reason now, why just to-day
We see our Florence grieve.
Ah child, look up into the sky!
In this low world, where great Deeds die,
What matter if we live?

A COURT LADY.

I.

Her hair was tawny with gold, her eyes with purple were dark,
Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a red and restless spark.

II.

Never was lady of Milan nobler in name and in race;
Never was lady of Italy fairer to see in the face.

III.

Never was lady on earth more true as woman and wife,
Larger in judgment and instinct, prouder in manners and life.

IV.

She stood in the early morning, and said to her maidens, 'Bring
That silken robe made ready to wear at the court of the king.

V.

'Bring me the clasps of diamond, lucid, clear of the mote,
Clasp me the large at the waist, and clasp me the small at the throat.

VI.

'Diamonds to fasten the hair, and diamonds to fasten the sleeves,
Laces to drop from their rays, like a powder of snow from the eaves.'

VII.

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight which gathered her up in a flame,
While, straight in her open carriage, she to the hospital came.

VIII.

In she went at the door, and gazing from end to end,
'Many and low are the pallets, but each is the place of a friend.'

IX.

Up she passed through the wards, and stood at a young man's bed:
Bloody the band on his brow, and livid the droop of his head.

X.

'Art thou a Lombard, my brother? Happy art thou,' she cried,
And smiled like Italy on him: he dreamed in her face and died.

XI.

Pale with his passing soul, she went on still to a second:

He was a grave hard man, whose years by dungeons were reckoned.

XII.

Wounds in his body were sore, wounds in his life were sorer.

'Art thou a Romagnole?' Her eyes drove lightnings before her.

XIII.

'Austrian and priest had joined to double and tighten the cord

Able to bind thee, O strong one,—free by the stroke of a sword.

XIV.

'Now be grave for the rest of us, using the life overcast

To ripen our wine of the present, (too new,) in glooms of the past.'

XV.

Down she stepped to a pallet where lay a face like a girl's,

Young, and pathetic with dying,—a deep black hole in the curls.

XVI.

'Art thou from Tuscany, brother? and seest thou, dreaming in pain,

Thy mother stand in the piazza, searching the List of the slain?'

XVII.

Kind as a mother herself, she touched his cheeks with her hands:
'Blessed is she who has borne thee, although she should weep as she stands.'

XVIII.

On she passed to a Frenchman, his arm carried off by a ball:
Kneeling,—'O more than my brother! how shall I thank thee for all?

XIX.

'Each of the heroes around us has fought for his land and line,
But thou hast fought for a stranger, in hate of a wrong not thine.

XX.

'Happy are all free peoples, too strong to be dispossessed.
But blessed are those among nations, who dare to be strong for the rest!'

XXI.

Ever she passed on her way, and came to a couch where pined
One with a face from Venetia, white with a hope out of mind.

XXII.

Long she stood and gazed, and twice she tried at the name,
But two great crystal tears were all that faltered and came.

XXIII.

Only a tear for Venice?—she turned as in passion and loss,
And stooped to his forehead and kissed it, as if she were kissing the cross.

XXIV.

Faint with that strain of heart she moved on then to another,
Stern and strong in his death. 'And dost thou suffer, my brother?'

XXV.

Holding his hands in hers:—'Out of the Piedmont lion
Cometh the sweetness of freedom! sweetest to live or to die on.'

XXVI.

Holding his cold rough hands,—'Well, oh, well have ye done
In noble, noble Piedmont, who would not be noble alone.'

XXVII.

Back he fell while she spoke. She rose to her feet with a spring,—
'That was a Piedmontese! and this is the Court of the King.'

AN AUGUST VOICE.

"Una voce augusta."—
MONITORE TOSCANO.

I.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
I made the treaty upon it.
Just venture a quiet rebuke;
Dall' Ongaro write him a sonnet;
Ricasoli gently explain
Some need of the constitution:
He'll swear to it over again,
Providing an 'easy solution.'
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

II.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
I promised the Emperor Francis
To argue the case by his book,
And ask you to meet his advances.
The Ducal cause, we know,

(Whether you or he be the wronger)
Has very strong points;—although
Your bayonets, there, have stronger.
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

III.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
He is not pure altogether.
For instance, the oath which he took
(In the Forty-eight rough weather)
He'd 'nail your flag to his mast,'
Then softly scuttled the boat you
Hoped to escape in at last,
And both by a 'Proprio motu.'
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

IV.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
The scheme meets nothing to shock it
In this smart letter, look,
We found in Radetsky's pocket;
Where his Highness in sprightly style
Of the flower of his Tuscans wrote,
'These heads be the hottest in file;
Pray shoot them the quickest.' Quote,
And call back the Grand Duke.

V.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
There *are* some things to object to.
He cheated, betrayed, and forsook,

Then called in the foe to protect you.
He taxed you for wines and for meats·
Throughout that eight years' pastime
Of Austria's drum in your streets—
Of course you remember the last time
You called back your Grand Duke?

VI.

You'll take back the Grand Duke?
It is not race he is poor in,
Although he never could brook
The patriot cousin at Turin.
His love of kin you discern,
By his hate of your flag and me—
So decidedly apt to turn
All colours at the sight of the Three.*
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

VII.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
'Twas weak that he fled from the Pitti;
But consider how little he shook
At thought of bombarding your city!
And, balancing that with this,
The Christian rule is plain for us;
. . Or the Holy Father's Swiss
Have shot his Perugians in vain for us.
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

* The Italian tricolor: red, green, and white.

VIII.

Pray take back your Grand Duke.
—I, too, have suffered persuasion.
All Europe, raven and rook,
Screeched at me armed for your nation.
Your cause in my heart struck spurs;
I swept such warnings aside for you:
My very child's eyes, and Hers,
Grew like my brother's who died for you.
You'll call back the Grand Duke?

IX.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
My French fought nobly with reason,—
Left many a Lombardy nook
Red as with wine out of season.
Little we grudged what was done there,
Paid freely your ransom of blood:
Our heroes stark in the sun there,
We would not recall if we could.
You'll call back the Grand Duke?

X.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
His son rode fast as he got off
That day on the enemy's hook,
When *I* had an epaulette shot off.

Though splashed (as I saw him afar, no,
Near) by those ghastly rains,
The mark, when you've washed him in Arno,
Will scarcely be larger than Cain's.
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

XI.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
'Twill be so simple, quite beautiful:
The shepherd recovers his crook,
. . If you should be sheep, and dutiful.
I spoke a word worth chalking
On Milan's wall—but stay,
Here's Poniatowsky talking,—
You'll listen to *him* to-day,
And call back the Grand Duke.

XII.

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
Observe, there's no one to force it,—
Unless the Madonna, St. Luke
Drew for you, choose to endorse it.
I charge you by great St. Martino
And prodigies quickened by wrong,
Remember your Dead on Ticino;
Be worthy, be constant, be strong.
—Bah!—call back the Grand Duke!!

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

ὡς βασιλει, ὡς θεῳ, ὡς νεκρῳ.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

I.

THE Pope on Christmas Day
Sits in St. Peter's chair;
But the peoples murmur and say,
'Our souls are sick and forlorn,
And who will show us where
Is the stable where Christ was born?'

II.

The star is lost in the dark;
The manger is lost in the straw;
The Christ cries faintly . . hark! . .
Through bands that swaddle and strangle—
But the Pope in the chair of awe
Looks down the great quadrangle.

III.

The magi kneel at his foot,
Kings of the east and west,
But, instead of the angels, (mute
Is the 'Peace on earth' of their song),
The peoples, perplexed and oppress,
Are sighing, 'How long, how long?'

IV.

And, instead of the kine, bewilder in
Shadow of aisle and dome,
The bear who tore up the children,
The fox who burnt up the corn,
And the wolf who suckled at Rome
Brothers to slay and to scorn.

V.

Cardinals left and right of him,
Worshippers round and beneath,
The silver trumpets at sight of him
Thrill with a musical blast:
But the people say through their teeth,
'Trumpets? we wait for the Last!'

VI.

He sits in the place of the Lord,
And asks for the gifts of the time;
Gold, for the haft of a sword,
To win back Romagna averse,
Incense, to sweeten a crime,
And myrrh, to embitter a curse.

VII.

Then a king of the west said, 'Good!—
I bring thee the gifts of the time;
Red, for the patriot's blood,
Green, for the martyr's crown,
White, for the dew and the rime,
When the morning of God comes down.'

VIII.

—O mystic tricolor bright!
The Pope's heart quailed like a man's:
The cardinals froze at the sight,
Bowing their tonsures hoary:
And the eyes in the peacock-fans
Winked at the alien glory.

IX.

But the peoples exclaimed in hope,
'Now blessed be he who has brought
These gifts of the time to the Pope,
When our souls were sick and forlorn.
—And *here* is the star we sought,
To show us where Christ was born!'

ITALY AND THE WORLD.

I.

Florence, Bologna, Parma, Modena.
When you named them a year ago,
So many graves reserved by God, in a
Day of Judgment, you seemed to know,
To open and let out the resurrection.

II.

And meantime, (you made your reflection
If you were English), was nought to be done
But sorting sables, in predilection
For all those martyrs dead and gone,
Till the new earth and heaven made ready.

III.

And if your politics were not heady,
Violent, . . 'Good,' you added, 'good
In all things! mourn on sure and steady.
Churchyard thistles are wholesome food
For our European wandering asses.

IV.

'The date of the resurrection passes
Human fore-knowledge: men unborn
Will gain by it (even in the lower classes),
But none of these. It is not the morn
Because the cock of France is crowing.

V.

'Cocks crow at midnight, seldom knowing
Starlight from dawn-light! 'tis a mad
Poor creature.' Here you paused, and growing
Scornful,—suddenly, let us add,
The trumpet sounded, the graves were open.

VI.

Life and life and life! agrope in
The dusk of death, warm hands, stretched out
For swords, proved more life still to hope in,
Beyond and behind. Arise with a shout,
Nation of Italy, slain and buried!

VII.

Hill to hill and turret to turret
Flashing the tricolor,—newly created
Beautiful Italy, calm, unhurried,
Rise heroic and renovated,
Rise to the final restitution.

VIII.

Rise; prefigure the grand solution
Of earth's municipal, insular schisms,—
Statesmen draping self-love's conclusion
In cheap, vernacular patriotisms,
Unable to give up Judæa for Jesus.

IX.

Bring us the higher example; release us
Into the larger coming time:
And into Christ's broad garment piece us
Rags of virtue as poor as crime,
National selfishness, civic vaunting.

X.

No more Jew nor Greek then,—taunting
Nor taunted;—no more England nor France!
But one confederate brotherhood planting
One flag only, to mark the advance,
Onward and upward, of all humanity.

XI.

For civilization perfected
Is fully developed Christianity.
'Measure the frontier,' shall it be said,
'Count the ships,' in national vanity?
—Count the nation's heart-beats sooner.

XII.

For, though behind by a cannon or schooner,
That nation still is predominant,
Whose pulse beats quickest in zeal to oppugn or
Succour another, in wrong or want,
Passing the frontier in love and abhorrence.

XIII.

Modena, Parma, Bologna, Florence,
Open us out the wider way!
Dwarf in that chapel of old St. Lawrence
Your Michel Angelo's giant Day,
With the grandeur of this Day breaking o'er us!

XIV.

Ye who, restrained as an ancient chorus,
Mute while the coryphæus spake,
Hush your separate voices before us,
Sink your separate lives for the sake
Of one sole Italy's living for ever!

XV.

Givers of coat and cloak too,—never
Grudging that purple of yours at the best,—
By your heroic will and endeavour
Each sublimely dispossessed,
That all may inherit what each surrenders!

XVI.

Earth shall bless you, O noble emenders
On egotist nations! Ye shall lead
The plough of the world, and sow new splendours
Into the furrow of things for seed,—
Ever the richer for what ye have given.

XVII.

Lead us and teach us, till earth and heaven
Grow larger around us and higher above.
Our sacrament-bread has a bitter leaven;
We bait our traps with the name of love,
Till hate itself has a kinder meaning.

XVIII.

Oh, this world: this cheating and screening
Of cheats! this conscience for candle-wicks,
Not beacon-fires! this over-weening
Of under-hand diplomatical tricks,
Dared for the country while scorned for the counter!

XIX.

Oh, this envy of those who mount here,
And oh, this malice to make them trip!
Rather quenching the fire there, drying the fount
To frozen body and thirsty lip, [here,
Than leave to a neighbour their ministration.

XX.

I cry aloud in my poet-passion,
Viewing my England o'er Alp and sea.
I loved her more in her ancient fashion:
She carries her rifles too thick for me,
Who spares them so in the cause of a brother.

XXI.

Suspicion, panic? end this pother.
The sword, kept sheathless at peace-time, rusts.
None fears for himself while he feels for another:
The brave man either fights or trusts,
And wears no mail in his private chamber.

XXII.

Beautiful Italy! golden amber
Warm with the kisses of lover and traitor!
Thou who hast drawn us on to remember,
Draw us to hope now: let us be greater
By this new future than that old story.

XXIII.

Till truer glory replaces all glory,
As the torch grows blind at the dawn of day;
And the nations, rising up, their sorry
And foolish sins shall put away,
As children their toys when the teacher enters.

XXIV.

Till Love's one centre devour these centres
Of many self-loves; and the patriot's trick
To better his land by egotist ventures,
Defamed from a virtue, shall make men sick,
As the scalp at the belt of some red hero.

XXV.

For certain virtues have dropped to zero,
Left by the sun on the mountain's dewy side;
Churchman's charities, tender as Nero,
Indian suttee, heathen suicide,
Service to rights divine, proved hollow:

XXVI.

And Heptarchy patriotisms must follow.
—National voices, distinct yet dependent,
Ensphering each other, as swallow does swallow,
With circles still widening and ever ascendant,
In multiform life to united progression,—

XXVII.

These shall remain. And when, in the session
Of nations, the separate language is heard,
Each shall aspire, in sublime indiscretion,
To help with a thought or exalt with a word
Less her own than her rival's honour.

XXVIII.

Each Christian nation shall take upon her
The law of the Christian man in vast:
The crown of the getter shall fall to the donor,
And last shall be first while first shall be last,
And to love best shall still be, to reign unsurpassed.

A CURSE FOR A NATION.

PROLOGUE.

I HEARD an angel speak last night,
And he said, 'Write!
Write a Nation's curse for me,
And send it over the Western Sea.'

I faltered, taking up the word:
'Not so, my lord!
If curses must be, choose another
To send thy curse against my brother.

'For I am bound by gratitude,
By love and blood,
To brothers of mine across the sea,
Who stretch out kindly hands to me.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write
My curse to-night.
From the summits of love a curse is driven,
As lightning is from the tops of heaven.'

'Not so,' I answered. 'Evermore
My heart is sore
For my own land's sins: for little feet
Of children bleeding along the street:

'For parked-up honors that gainsay
The right of way:
For almsgiving through a door that is
Not open enough for two friends to kiss:

'For love of freedom which abates
Beyond the Straits:
For patriot virtue starved to vice on
Self-praise, self-interest, and suspicion:

'For an oligarchic parliament,
And bribes well-meant.
What curse to another land assign,
When heavy-souled for the sins of mine?'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write
My curse to-night.
Because thou hast strength to see and hate
A foul thing done *within* thy gate.'

'Not so,' I answered once again.
'To curse, choose men.
For I, a woman, have only known
How the heart melts and the tears run down.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write
My curse to-night.
Some women weep and curse, I say
(And no one marvels,) night and day.

'And thou shalt take their part to-night,
Weep and write.
A curse from the depths of womanhood
Is very salt, and bitter, and good.'

So thus I wrote, and mourned indeed,
What all may read.
And thus, as was enjoined on me,
I send it over the Western Sea.

THE CURSE.

I.

BECAUSE ye have broken your own chain
With the strain
Of brave men climbing a Nation's height,
Yet thence bear down with brand and thong
On souls of others,—for this wrong
This is the curse. Write.

Because yourselves are standing straight
In the state
Of Freedom's foremost acolyte,
Yet keep calm footing all the time
On writhing bond-slaves,—for this crime
This is the curse. Write.

Because ye prosper in God's name,
With a claim
To honor in the old world's sight,
Yet do the fiend's work perfectly
In strangling martyrs,—for this lie
This is the curse. Write.

II.

Ye shall watch while kings conspire
Round the people's smouldering fire,
And, warm for your part,
Shall never dare—O shame!
To utter the thought into flame
Which burns at your heart.
This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while nations strive
With the bloodhounds, die or survive,
Drop faint from their jaws,
Or throttle them backward to death;
And only under your breath
Shall favour the cause.
This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while strong men draw
The nets of feudal law
To strangle the weak;
And, counting the sin for a sin,
Your soul shall be sadder within
Than the word ye shall speak.
This is the curse. Write.

When good men are praying erect
That Christ may avenge his elect
And deliver the earth,
The prayer in your ears, said low,
Shall sound like the tramp of a foe
That's driving you forth.
This is the curse. Write.

When wise men give you their praise,
They shall pause in the heat of the phrase,
As if carried too far.
When ye boast your own charters kept true,
Ye shall blush; for the thing which ye do
Derides what ye are.
This is the curse. Write.

When fools cast taunts at your gate,
Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate
As ye look o'er the wall;
For your conscience, tradition, and name
Explode with a deadlier blame
Than the worst of them all.
This is the curse. Write.

Go, wherever ill deeds shall be done,
Go, plant your flag in the sun
Beside the ill-doers!
And recoil from clenching the curse
Of God's witnessing Universe
With a curse of yours.
THIS is the curse. Write.

LAST POEMS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THESE Poems are given as they occur on a list drawn up last June. A few had already been printed in periodicals.

There is hardly such direct warrant for publishing the Translations; which were only intended, many years ago, to accompany and explain certain Engravings after ancient Gems, in the projected work of a friend, by whose kindness they are now recovered: but as two of the original series (the 'Adonis' of Bion, and 'Song to the Rose' from Achilles Tatius) have subsequently appeared, it is presumed that the remainder may not improperly follow.

A single recent version is added.

LONDON, *February*, 1862.

TO "GRATEFUL FLORENCE,"

TO THE MUNICIPALITY, HER REPRESENTATIVE,

AND TO TOMMASEO, ITS SPOKESMAN,

MOST GRATEFULLY.

LAST POEMS.

LITTLE MATTIE.

I.

Dead! Thirteen a month ago!
Short and narrow her life's walk;
Lover's love she could not know
Even by a dream or talk:
Too young to be glad of youth,
Missing honour, labour, rest,
And the warmth of a babe's mouth
At the blossom of her breast.
Must you pity her for this
And for all the loss it is,
You, her mother, with wet face,
Having had all in your case?

II.

Just so young but yesternight,
Now she is as old as death.

Meek, obedient in your sight,
  Gentle to a beck or breath
Only on last Monday! Yours,
  Answering you like silver bells
Lightly touched! An hour matures:
  You can teach her nothing else.
She has seen the mystery hid
Under Egypt's pyramid:
By those eyelids pale and close
Now she knows what Rhamses knows.

III.

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth
  Down her patient locks of silk,
Cold and passive as in truth
  You your fingers in spilt milk
Drew along a marble floor;
  But her lips you cannot wring
Into saying a word more,
  'Yes,' or 'No,' or such a thing:
Though you call and beg and wreak
Half your soul out in a shriek,
She will lie there in default
And most innocent revolt.

IV.

Ay, and if she spoke, may be
  She would answer like the Son,
'What is now 'twixt thee and me?'
  Dreadful answer! better none.

Yours on Monday, God's to-day!
  Yours, your child, your blood, your heart,
Called . . you called her, did you say,
  'Little Mattie' for your part?
Now already it sounds strange,
And you wonder, in this change,
What He calls His angel-creature,
Higher up than you can reach her.

V.

'Twas a green and easy world
  As she took it; room to play,
(Though one's hair might get uncurled
  At the far end of the day).
What she suffered she shook off
  In the sunshine; what she sinned
She could pray on high enough
  To keep safe above the wind.
If reproved by God or you,
'Twas to better her, she knew;
And if crossed, she gathered still
'Twas to cross out something ill.

VI.

You, you had the right, you thought
  To survey her with sweet scorn,
Poor gay child, who had not caught
  Yet the octave-stretch forlorn
Of your larger wisdom! Nay,
  Now your places are changed so,

In that same superior way
  She regards you dull and low
As you did herself exempt
From life's sorrows. Grand contempt
Of the spirits risen awhile,
Who look back with such a smile!

VII.

There's the sting of 't. That, I think,
  Hurts the most a thousandfold!
To feel sudden, at a wink,
  Some dear child we used to scold,
Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease,
  Teach and tumble as our own,
All its curls about our knees,
  Rise up suddenly full-grown.
Who could wonder such a sight
Made a woman mad outright?
Show me Michael with the sword
Rather than such angels, Lord!

A FALSE STEP.

I.

Sweet, thou hast trod on a heart.
Pass; there's a world full of men;
And women as fair as thou art
Must do such things now and then.

II.

Thou only hast stepped unaware,—
Malice, not one can impute;
And why should a heart have been there
In the way of a fair woman's foot?

III.

It was not a stone that could trip,
Nor was it a thorn that could rend:
Put up thy proud underlip!
'Twas merely the heart of a friend.

IV.

And yet peradventure one day
Thou, sitting alone at the glass,
Remarking the bloom gone away,
Where the smile in its dimplement was,

V.

And seeking around thee in vain
From hundreds who flattered before,
Such a word as, 'Oh, not in the main
Do I hold thee less precious, but more!'

VI.

Thou'lt sigh, very like, on thy part,
'Of all I have known or can know,
I wish I had only that Heart
I trod upon ages ago!'

VOID IN LAW.

I.

Sleep, little babe, on my knee,
Sleep, for the midnight is chill,
And the moon has died out in the tree,
And the great human world goeth ill.
Sleep, for the wicked agree:
Sleep, let them do as they will.
Sleep.

II.

Sleep, thou hast drawn from my breast
The last drop of milk that was good;
And now, in a dream, suck the rest,
Lest the real should trouble thy blood.
Suck, little lips dispossessed,
As we kiss in the air whom we would.
Sleep.

III.

O lips of thy father! the same,
So like! Very deeply they swore

When he gave me his ring and his name,
To take back, I imagined, no more!
And now is all changed like a game,
Though the old cards are used as of yore?
Sleep.

IV.

'Void in law,' said the Courts. Something wrong
In the forms? Yet, 'Till death part us two,
I, James, take thee, Jessie,' was strong,
And ONE witness competent. True
Such a marriage was worth an old song,
Heard in Heaven though, as plain as the New.
Sleep.

V.

Sleep, little child, his and mine!
Her throat has the antelope curve,
And her cheek just the colour and line
Which fade not before him nor swerve:
Yet *she* has no child!—the divine
Seal of right upon loves that deserve.
Sleep.

VI.

My child! though the world take her part,
Saying, 'She was the woman to choose,
He had eyes, was a man in his heart,'—
We twain the decision refuse:

We . . weak as I am, as thou art, . .
Cling on to him, never to loose.
Sleep.

VII.

He thinks that, when done with this place,
All's ended? he'll new-stamp the ore?
Yes, Cæsar's—but not in our case.
Let him learn we are waiting before
The grave's mouth, the heaven's gate, God's face,
With implacable love evermore.
Sleep.

VIII.

He's ours, though he kissed her but now
He's ours, though she kissed in reply:
He's ours, though himself disavow,
And God's universe favour the lie;
Ours to claim, ours to clasp, ours below,
Ours above, . . if we live, if we die.
Sleep.

IX.

Ah baby, my baby, too rough
Is my lullaby? What have I said?
Sleep! When I've wept long enough
I shall learn to weep softly instead,
And piece with some alien stuff
My heart to lie smooth for thy head.
Sleep.

X.

Two souls met upon thee, my sweet;
Two loves led thee out to the sun:
Alas, pretty hands, pretty feet,
If the one who remains (only one)
Set her grief at thee, turned in a heat
To thine enemy,—were it well done?
Sleep.

XI.

May He of the manger stand near
And love thee! An infant He came
To His own who rejected Him here,
But the Magi brought gifts all the same.
I hurry the cross on my Dear!
My gifts are the griefs I declaim!
Sleep.

LORD WALTER'S WIFE.

I.

'But why do you go?' said the lady, while both sate under the yew,
And her eyes were alive in their depth, as the kraken beneath the sea-blue.

II.

'Because I fear you,' he answered;—'because you are far too fair,
And able to strangle my soul in a mesh of your gold-coloured hair.'

III.

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason! Such knots are quickly undone,
And too much beauty, I reckon, is nothing but too much sun.'

IV.

'Yet farewell so,' he answered;—'the sun-stroke's fatal at times.

I value your husband, Lord Walter, whose gallop
rings still from the limes.'

V.

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason. You smell a rose
through a fence:
If two should smell it, what matter? who grumbles,
and where's the pretence?'

VI.

'But I,' he replied, 'have promised another, when
love was free,
To love her alone, alone, who alone and afar loves me.'

VII.

'Why, that,' she said, 'is no reason. Love's always
free, I am told.
Will you vow to be safe from the headache on
Tuesday, and think it will hold?'

VIII.

'But you,' he replied, 'have a daughter, a young
little child, who was laid
In your lap to be pure; so I leave you: the angels
would make me afraid.'

IX.

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason. The angels keep
out of the way;
And Dora, the child, observes nothing, although you
should please me and stay.'

X.

At which he rose up in his anger,—'Why, now, you no longer are fair!
Why, now, you no longer are fatal, but ugly and hateful, I swear.'

XI.

At which she laughed out in her scorn.—'These men! Oh, these men overnice,
Who are shocked if a colour not virtuous, is frankly put on by a vice.'

XII.

Her eyes blazed upon him—'And *you!* You bring us your vices so near
That we smell them! You think in our presence a thought 'twould defame us to hear!

XIII.

'What reason had you, and what right,—I appeal to your soul from my life,—
To find me too fair as a woman? Why, sir, I am pure, and a wife.

XIV.

'Is the day-star too fair up above you? It burns you not. Dare you imply
I brushed you more close than the star does, when Walter had set me as high?

XV.

'If a man finds a woman too fair, he means simply adapted too much
To uses unlawful and fatal. The praise!—shall I thank you for such?

XVI.

'Too fair?—not unless you misuse us! and surely if, once in a while,
You attain to it, straightway you call us no longer too fair, but too vile.

XVII.

A moment,—I pray your attention!—I have a poor word in my head
I must utter, though womanly custom would set it down better unsaid.

XVIII.

'You grew, sir, pale to impertinence, once when I showed you a ring.
You kissed my fan when I dropped it. No matter!—I've broken the thing.

XIX.

'You did me the honour, perhaps, to be moved at my side now and then
In the senses—a vice, I have heard, which is common to beasts and some men.

XX.

'Love's a virtue for heroes!—as white as the snow on high hills,
And immortal as every great soul is that struggles, endures, and fulfils.

XXI.

'I love my Walter profoundly,—you, Maude, though you faltered a week,
For the sake of . . what was it? an eyebrow? or, less still, a mole on a cheek?

XXII.

'And since, when all's said, you're too noble to stoop to the frivolous cant
About crimes irresistible, virtues that swindle, betray ' ' and supplant,

XXIII.

'I determined to prove to yourself that, whate'er you might dream or avow
By illusion, you wanted precisely no more of me than you have now.

XXIV.

'There! Look me full in the face!—in the face. Understand, if you can,
That the eyes of such women as I am, are clean as the palm of a man.

XXV.

'Drop his hand, you insult him. Avoid us for fear
we should cost you a scar—
You take us for harlots, I tell you, and not for the
women we are.

XXVI.

'You wronged me: but then I considered . . . there's
Walter! And so at the end,
I vowed that he should not be mulcted, by me, in the
hand of a friend.

XXVII.

'Have I hurt you indeed? We are quits then. Nay,
friend of my Walter, be mine!
Come Dora, my darling, my angel, and help me to ask
him to dine.'

BIANCA AMONG THE NIGHTINGALES.

I.

The cypress stood up like a church
That night we felt our love would hold,
And saintly moonlight seemed to search
And wash the whole world clean as gold;
The olives crystallized the vales'
Broad slopes until the hills grew strong:
The fireflies and the nightingales
Throbbed each to either, flame and song.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

II.

Upon the angle of its shade
The cypress stood, self-balanced high;
Half up, half down, as double-made,
Along the ground, against the sky.
And *we*, too! from such soul-height went
Such leaps of blood, so blindly driven,
We scarce knew if our nature meant
Most passionate earth or intense heaven.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

III.

We paled with love, we shook with love,
We kissed so close we could not vow;
Till Giulio whispered, 'Sweet, above
God's Ever guaranties this Now.'
And through his words the nightingales
Drove straight and full their long clear call,
Like arrows through heroic mails,
And love was awful in it all.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

IV.

O cold white moonlight of the north,
Refresh these pulses, quench this hell!
O coverture of death drawn forth
Across this garden-chamber . . well!
But what have nightingales to do
In gloomy England, called the free . .
(Yes, free to die in! . .) when we two
Are sundered, singing still to me?
And still they sing, the nightingales.

V.

I think I hear him, how he cried
'My own soul's life' between their notes.
Each man has but one soul supplied,
And that's immortal. Though his throat's

On fire with passion now, to *her*
He can't say what to me he said!
And yet he moves her, they aver.
The nightingales sing through my head,
The nightingales, the nightingales.

VI.

He says to her what moves her most.
He would not name his soul within
Her hearing,—rather pays her cost
With praises to her lips and chin.
Man has but one soul, 'tis ordained,
And each soul but one love, I add;
Yet souls are damned and love 's profaned.
These nightingales will sing me mad!
The nightingales, the nightingales.

VII.

I marvel how the birds can sing.
There's little difference, in their view,
Betwixt our Tuscan trees that spring
As vital flames into the blue,
And dull round blots of foliage meant
Like saturated sponges here
To suck the fogs up. As content
Is he too in this land, 'tis clear.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

VIII.

My native Florence! dear, forgone!
I see across the Alpine ridge

How the last feast-day of Saint John
Shot rockets from Carraia bridge.
The luminous city, tall with fire,
Trod deep down in that river of ours,
While many a boat with lamp and choir
Skimmed birdlike over glittering towers.
I will not hear these nightingales.

IX.

I seem to float, *we* seem to float
Down Arno's stream in festive guise;
A boat strikes flame into our boat,
And up that lady seems to rise
As then she rose. The shock had flashed
A vision on us! What a head,
What leaping eyeballs!—beauty dashed
To splendour by a sudden dread.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

X.

Too bold to sin, too weak to die;
Such women are so. As for me,
I would we had drowned there, he and I,
That moment, loving perfectly.
He had not caught her with her loosed
Gold ringlets . . rarer in the south . .
Nor heard the 'Grazie tanto' bruised
To sweetness by her English mouth.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

XI.

She had not reached him at my heart
With her fine tongue, as snakes indeed
Kill flies; nor had I, for my part,
Yearned after, in my desperate need,
And followed him as he did her
To coasts left bitter by the tide,
Whose very nightingales, elsewhere
Delighting, torture and deride!
For still they sing, the nightingales.

XII.

A worthless woman; mere cold clay
As all false things are: but so fair,
She takes the breath of men away
Who gaze upon her unaware.
I would not play her larcenous tricks
To have her looks! She lied and stole,
And spat into my love's pure pyx
The rank saliva of her soul.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

XIII.

I would not for her white and pink,
Though such he likes—her grace of limb,
Though such he has praised—nor yet, I think,
For life itself, though spent with him,
Commit such sacrilege, affront
God's nature which is love, intrude

'Twixt two affianced souls, and hunt
Like spiders, in the altar's wood.
I cannot bear these nightingales.

XIV.

If she chose sin, some gentler guise
She might have sinned in, so it seems:
She might have pricked out both my eyes,
And I still seen him in my dreams!
—Or drugged me in my soup or wine,
Nor left me angry afterward:
To die here with his hand in mine
His breath upon me, were not hard.
(Our Lady hush these nightingales!)

XV.

But set a springe for *him*, 'mio ben,'
My only good, my first last love!—
Though Christ knows well what sin is, when
He sees some things done they must move
Himself to wonder. Let her pass.
I think of her by night and day.
Must *I* too join her . . out, alas! . .
With Giulio, in each word I say?
And evermore the nightingales!

XVI.

Giulio, my Giulio!—sing they so,
And you be silent? Do I speak,
And you not hear? An arm you throw

Round some one, and I feel so weak?
—Oh, owl-like birds! They sing for spite,
They sing for hate, they sing for doom,
They'll sing through death who sing through night,
They'll sing and stun me in the tomb—
The nightingales, the nightingales!

MY KATE.

—✦—

I.

She was not as pretty as women I know,
And yet all your best made of sunshine and snow
Drop to shade, melt to nought in the long-trodden ways,
While she's still remembered on warm and cold days—
My Kate.

II.

Her air had a meaning, her movements a grace;
You turned from the fairest to gaze on her face:
And when you had once seen her forehead and mouth,
You saw as distinctly her soul and her truth—
My Kate.

III.

Such a blue inner light from her eyelids outbroke,
You looked at her silence and fancied she spoke:
When she did, so peculiar yet soft was the tone,
Though the loudest spoke also, you heard her alone—
My Kate.

IV.

I doubt if she said to you much that could act
As a thought or suggestion: she did not attract
In the sense of the brilliant or wise: I infer
'Twas her thinking of others, made you think of her—
My Kate.

V.

She never found fault with you, never implied
Your wrong by her right; and yet men at her side
Grew nobler, girls purer, as through the whole town
The children were gladder that pulled at her gown—
My Kate.

VI.

None knelt at her feet confessed lovers in thrall;
They knelt more to God than they used,—that was all:
If you praised her as charming, some asked what you
meant,
But the charm of her presence was felt when she went—
My Kate.

VII.

The weak and the gentle, the ribald and rude,
She took as she found them, and did them all good;
It always was so with her—see what you have!
She has made the grass greener even here . . with her
grave—
My Kate.

VIII.

My dear one!—when thou wast alive with the rest,
I held thee the sweetest and loved thee the best:
And now thou art dead, shall I not take thy part
As thy smiles used to do for thyself, my sweet Heart—
My Kate?

A SONG

FOR

THE RAGGED SCHOOLS OF LONDON.

WRITTEN IN ROME.

I.

I AM listening here in Rome.
'England's strong,' say many speakers,
'If she winks, the Czar must come,
Prow and topsail, to the breakers.'

II.

'England's rich in coal and oak,'
Adds a Roman, getting moody,
'If she shakes a travelling cloak,
Down our Appian roll the scudi.'

III.

'England's righteous,' they rejoin,
'Who shall grudge her exaltations,
When her wealth of golden coin
Works the welfare of the nations?'

IV.

I am listening here in Rome.
Over Alps a voice is sweeping—
'England 's cruel, save us some
Of these victims in her keeping!'

V.

As the cry beneath the wheel
Of an old triumphal Roman
Cleft the people's shouts like steel,
While the show was spoilt for no man,

VI.

Comes that voice. Let others shout,
Other poets praise my land here:
I am sadly sitting out,
Praying, 'God forgive her grandeur.'

VII.

Shall we boast of empire, where
Time with ruin sits commissioned?
In God's liberal blue air
Peter's dome itself looks wizened;

VIII.

And the mountains, in disdain,
Gather back their lights of opal
From the dumb, despondent plain,
Heaped with jawbones of a people.

IX.

Lordly English, think it o'er,
Cæsar's doing is all undone!
You have cannons on your shore,
And free Parliaments in London,

X.

Princes' parks, and merchants' homes,
Tents for soldiers, ships for seamen,—
Ay, but ruins worse than Rome's
In your pauper men and women.

XI.

Women leering through the gas,
(Just such bosoms used to nurse you)
Men, turned wolves by famine—pass!
Those can speak themselves, and curse you.

XII.

But these others—children small,
Spilt like blots about the city,
Quay, and street, and palace-wall—
Take them up into your pity!

XIII.

Ragged children with bare feet,
Whom the angels in white raiment
Know the names of, to repeat
When they come on you for payment.

XIV.

Ragged children, hungry-eyed,
Huddled up out of the coldness
On your doorsteps, side by side,
Till your footman damns their boldness.

XV.

In the alleys, in the squares,
Begging, lying little rebels;
In the noisy thoroughfares,
Struggling on with piteous trebles.

XVI.

Patient children—think what pain
Makes a young child patient—ponder!
Wronged too commonly to strain
After right, or wish, or wonder.

XVII.

Wicked children, with peaked chins,
And old foreheads! there are many
With no pleasures except sins,
Gambling with a stolen penny.

XVIII.

Sickly children, that whine low
To themselves and not their mothers,
From mere habit,—never so
Hoping help or care from others.

XIX.

Healthy children, with those blue
English eyes, fresh from their Maker,
Fierce and ravenous, staring through
At the brown loaves of the baker.

XX.

I am listening here in Rome,
And the Romans are confessing,
'English children pass in bloom
All the prettiest made for blessing.

XXI.

'*Angli angeli!*' (resumed
From the mediæval story)
'Such rose angelhoods, emplumed
In such ringlets of pure glory!'

XXII.

Can we smooth down the bright hair,
O my sisters, calm, unthrilled in
Our heart's pulses? Can we bear
The sweet looks of our own children,

XXIII.

While those others, lean and small,
Scurf and mildew of the city,
Spot our streets, convict us all
Till we take them into pity?

XXIV.

'Is it our fault?' you reply,
'When, throughout civilization,
Every nation's empery
Is asserted by starvation?

XXV.

'All these mouths we cannot feed,
And we cannot clothe these bodies.'
Well, if man 's so hard indeed,
Let them learn at least what God is!

XXVI.

Little outcasts from life's fold,
The grave's hope they may be joined in,
By Christ's covenant consoled
For our social contract's grinding.

XXVII.

If no better can be done,
Let us do but this,—endeavour
That the sun behind the sun
Shine upon them while they shiver!

XXVIII.

On the dismal London flags,
Through the cruel social juggle,
Put a thought beneath their rags
To ennoble the heart's struggle.

XXIX.

O my sisters, not so much
Are we asked for—not a blossom
From our children's nosegay, such
As we gave it from our bosom,—

XXX.

Not the milk left in their cup,
Not the lamp while they are sleeping,
Not the little cloak hung up
While the coat 's in daily keeping,—

XXXI.

But a place in RAGGED SCHOOLS,
Where the outcasts may to-morrow
Learn by gentle words and rules
Just the uses of their sorrow.

XXXII.

O my sisters! children small,
Blue-eyed, wailing through the city—
Our own babes cry in them all:
Let us take them into pity.

MAY'S LOVE.

I.

You love all, you say,
  Round, beneath, above me:
Find me then some way
  Better than to love me,
Me, too, dearest May!

II.

O world-kissing eyes
  Which the blue heavens melt to;
I, sad, overwise,
  Loathe the sweet looks dealt to
All things—men and flies.

III.

You love all, you say:
  Therefore, Dear, abate me
Just your love, I pray!
  Shut your eyes and hate me--
Only *me*—fair May!

AMY'S CRUELTY.

I.

Fair Amy of the terraced house,
Assist me to discover
Why you who would not hurt a mouse
Can torture so your lover.

II.

You give your coffee to the cat,
You stroke the dog for coming,
And all your face grows kinder at
The little brown bee's humming.

III.

But when *he* haunts your door . . the town
Marks coming and marks going . .
You seem to have stitched your eyelids down
To that long piece of sewing!

IV.

You never give a look, not you,
Nor drop him a 'Good morning,'
To keep his long day warm and blue,
So fretted by your scorning.

V.

She shook her head—'The mouse and bee
For crumb or flower will linger:
The dog is happy at my knee,
The cat purrs at my finger.

VI.

'But *he* . . to *him*, the least thing given
Means great things at a distance;
He wants my world, my sun, my heaven,
Soul, body, whole existence.

VII.

'They say love gives as well as takes;
But I'm a simple maiden,—
My mother's first smile when she wakes
I still have smiled and prayed in.

VIII.

'I only know my mother's love
Which gives all and asks nothing;
And this new loving sets the groove
Too much the way of loathing.

IX.

'Unless he gives me all in change,
I forfeit all things by him:
The risk is terrible and strange—
I tremble, doubt, . . deny him.

X.

'He's sweetest friend or hardest foe,
Best angel or worst devil;
I either hate or . , love him so,
I can't be merely civil!

XI.

'You trust a woman who puts forth
Her blossoms thick as summer's?
You think she dreams what love is worth,
Who casts it to new-comers?

XII.

'Such love's a cowslip-ball to fling,
A moment's pretty pastime;
I give . . all me, if anything,
The first time and the last time.

XIII.

'Dear neighbour of the trellised house,
A man should murmur never,
Though treated worse than dog and mouse,
Till doated on for ever!'

MY HEART AND I.

I.

Enough! we're tired, my heart and I.
We sit beside the headstone thus,
And wish that name were carved for us.
The moss reprints more tenderly
The hard types of the mason's knife,
As heaven's sweet life renews earth's life
With which we're tired, my heart and I.

II.

You see we're tired, my heart and I.
We dealt with books, we trusted men,
And in our own blood drenched the pen,
As if such colours could not fly.
We walked too straight for fortune's end,
We loved too true to keep a friend;
At last we're tired, my heart and I.

III.

How tired we feel, my heart and I!
We seem of no use in the world;
Our fancies hang grey and uncurled
About men's eyes indifferently;
Our voice which thrilled you so, will let
You sleep; our tears are only wet:
What do we here, my heart and I?

IV.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!
It was not thus in that old time
When Ralph sat with me 'neath the lime
To watch the sunset from the sky.
'Dear love, you're looking tired,' he said;
I, smiling at him, shook my head:
'Tis now we're tired, my heart and I.

V.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!
Though now none takes me on his arm
To fold me close and kiss me warm
Till each quick breath end in a sigh
Of happy languor. Now, alone,
We lean upon this graveyard stone,
Uncheered, unkissed, my heart and I.

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VI.

Tired out we are, my heart and I.
Suppose the world brought diadems
To tempt us, crusted with loose gems
Of powers and pleasures? Let it try.
We scarcely care to look at even
A pretty child, or God's blue heaven,
We feel so tired, my heart and I.

VII.

Yet who complains? My heart and I?
In this abundant earth no doubt
Is little room for things worn out:
Disdain them, break them, throw them by!
And if before the days grew rough
We *once* were loved, used,—well enough,
I think, we've fared, my heart and I.

THE BEST THING IN THE WORLD.

What's the best thing in the world?
June-rose, by May-dew impearled;
Sweet south-wind, that means no rain;
Truth, not cruel to a friend;
Pleasure, not in haste to end;
Beauty, not self-decked and curled
Till its pride is over-plain;
Light, that never makes you wink;
Memory, that gives no pain;
Love, when, *so*, you're loved again.
What's the best thing in the world?
—Something out of it, I think.

WHERE'S AGNES?

I.

Nay, if I had come back so,
And found her dead in her grave,
And if a friend I know
Had said, 'Be strong, nor rave:
She lies there, dead below:

II.

'I saw her, I who speak,
White, stiff, the face one blank:
The blue shade came to her cheek
Before they nailed the plank,
For she had been dead a week.'

III.

Why, if he had spoken so,
I might have believed the thing,
Although her look, although
Her step, laugh, voice's ring
Lived in me still as they do.

IV.

But dead that other way,
Corrupted thus and lost?
That sort of worm in the clay?
I cannot count the cost,
That I should rise and pay.

V.

My Agnes false? such shame?
She? Rather be it said
That the pure saint of her name
Has stood there in her stead,
And tricked you to this blame.

VI.

Her very gown, her cloak
Fell chastely: no disguise,
But expression! while she broke
With her clear grey morning-eyes
Full upon me and then spoke.

VII.

She wore her hair away
From her forehead,—like a cloud
Which a little wind in May
Peels off finely: disallowed
Though bright enough to stay.

VIII.

For the heavens must have the place
To themselves, to use and shine in,
As her soul would have her face
To press through upon mine, in
That orb of angel grace.

IX.

Had she any fault at all,
'Twas having none, I thought too—
There seemed a sort of thrall;
As she felt her shadow ought to
Fall straight upon the wall.

X.

Her sweetness strained the sense
Of common life and duty;
And every day's expense
Of moving in such beauty
Required, almost, defence.

XI.

What good, I thought, is done
By such sweet things, if any?
This world smells ill i' the sun
Though the garden-flowers are many,—
She is only one.

XII.

Can a voice so low and soft
Take open actual part
With Right,—maintain aloft
Pure truth in life or art,
Vexed always, wounded oft?—

XIII.

She fit, with that fair pose
Which melts from curve to curve,
To stand, run, work with those
Who wrestle and deserve,
And speak plain without glose?

XIV.

But I turned round on my fear
Defiant, disagreeing—
What if God has set her here
Less for action than for Being?—
For the eye and for the ear.

XV.

Just to show what beauty may,
Just to prove what music can,—
And then to die away
From the presence of a man,
Who shall learn, henceforth, to pray?

XVI.

As a door, left half ajar
In heaven, would make him think
How heavenly-different are
Things glanced at through the chink,
Till he pined from near to far.

XVII.

That door could lead to hell?
That shining merely meant
Damnation? What! She fell
Like a woman, who was sent
Like an angel, by a spell?

XVIII.

She, who scarcely trod the earth,
Turned mere dirt? My Agnes,—mine!
Called so! felt of too much worth
To be used so! too divine
To be breathed near, and so forth!

XIX.

Why, I dared not name a sin
In her presence: I went round,
Clipped its name and shut it in
Some mysterious crystal sound,—
Changed the dagger for the pin.

XX.

Now you name herself *that word?*
O my Agnes! O my saint!
Then the great joys of the Lord
Do not last? Then all this paint
Runs off nature? leaves a board?

XXI.

Who's dead here? No, not she:
Rather I! or whence this damp
Cold corruption's misery?
While my very mourners stamp
Closer in the clods on me.

XXII.

And my mouth is full of dust
Till I cannot speak and curse—
Speak and damn him . . 'Blame's unjust'?
Sin blots out the universe,
All because she would and must?

XXIII.

She, my white rose, dropping off
The high rose-tree branch! and not
That the night-wind blew too rough,
Or the noon-sun burnt too hot,
But, that being a rose—'twas enough!

XXIV.

Then henceforth, may earth grow trees!
No more roses!—hard straight lines
To score lies out! none of these
Fluctuant curves, but firs and pines,
Poplars, cedars, cypresses!

DE PROFUNDIS.

I.

THE face which, duly as the sun,
Rose up for me with life begun,
To mark all bright hours of the day
With hourly love, is dimmed away,—
And yet my days go on, go on,

II.

The tongue which, like a stream, could run
Smooth music from the roughest stone,
And every morning with 'Good day'
Make each day good, is hushed away,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

III.

The heart which, like a staff, was one
For mine to lean and rest upon,
The strongest on the longest day
With steadfast love, is caught away,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

IV.

And cold before my summer's done,
And deaf in Nature's general tune,
And fallen too low for special fear;
And here, with hope no longer here,—
While the tears drop, my days go on.

V.

The world goes whispering to its own,
'This anguish pierces to the bone;'
And tender friends go sighing round,
'What love can ever cure this wound?'
My days go on, my days go on.

VI.

The past rolls forward on the sun
And makes all night. O dreams begun,
Not to be ended! Ended bliss,
And life that will not end in this!
My days go on, my days go on.

VII.

Breath freezes on my lips to moan:
As one alone, once not alone,
I sit and knock at Nature's door,
Heart-bare, heart-hungry, very poor,
Whose desolated days go on.

VIII.

I knock and cry,—Undone, undone!
Is there no help, no comfort,—none?
No gleaning in the wide wheat-plains
Where others drive their loaded wains?
My vacant days go on, go on.

IX.

This Nature, though the snows be down,
Thinks kindly of the bird of June:
The little red hip on the tree
Is ripe for such. What is for me,
Whose days so winterly go on?

X.

No bird am I, to sing in June,
And dare not ask an equal boon.
Good nests and berries red are Nature's
To give away to better creatures,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

XI.

I ask less kindness to be done,—
Only to loose these pilgrim-shoon,
(Too early worn and grimed) with sweet
Cool deathly touch to these tired feet,
Till days go out which now go on.

XII.

Only to lift the turf unmown
From off the earth where it has grown,
Some cubit-space, and say, 'Behold,
Creep in, poor Heart, beneath that fold,
Forgetting how the days go on.'

XIII.

What harm would that do? Green anon
The sward would quicken, overshone
By skies as blue; and crickets might
Have leave to chirp there day and night
While my new rest went on, went on.

XIV.

From gracious Nature have I won
Such liberal bounty? may I run
So, lizard-like, within her side,
And there be safe, who now am tried
By days that painfully go on?

XV.

—A Voice reproves me thereupon,
More sweet than Nature's when the drone
Of bees is sweetest and more deep
Than when the rivers overleap
The shuddering pines, and thunder on.

XVI.

God's Voice, not Nature's! Night and noon
He sits upon the great white throne
And listens for the creatures' praise.
What babble we of days and days?
The Day-spring He, whose days go on.

XVII.

He reigns above, He reigns alone;
Systems burn out and leave his throne;
Fair mists of seraphs melt and fall
Around Him, changeless amid all,—
Ancient of Days, whose days go on.

XVIII.

He reigns below, He reigns alone,
And, having life in love forgone
Beneath the crown of sovran thorns,
He reigns the Jealous God. Who mourns
Or rules with Him, while days go on?

XIX.

By anguish which made pale the sun,
I hear Him charge His saints that none
Among His creatures anywhere
Blaspheme against Him with despair,
However darkly days go on.

XX.

Take from my head the thorn-wreath brown!
No mortal grief deserves that crown.
O súpreme Love, chief misery,
The sharp regalia are for THEE
Whose days eternally go on!

XXI.

For us,—whatever's undergone,
Thou knowest, willest what is done.
Grief may be joy misunderstood;
Only the Good discerns the good.
I trust Thee while my days go on.

XXII.

Whatever's lost, it first was won;
We will not struggle nor impugn.
Perhaps the cup was broken here,
That Heaven's new wine might show more clear.
I praise Thee while my days go on.

XXIII.

I praise Thee while my days go on;
I love Thee while my days go on:
Through dark and dearth, through fire and frost,
With emptied arms and treasure lost,
I thank Thee while my days go on.

XXIV.

And having in thy life-depth thrown
Being and suffering (which are one),
As a child drops his pebble small
Down some deep well, and hears it fall
Smiling—so I. THY DAYS GO ON.

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.

I.

What was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river.

II.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river:
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

III.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river;

And hacked and hewed as a great god can,
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

IV.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
(How tall it stood in the river!)
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty thing
In holes, as he sat by the river.

V.

'This is the way,' laughed the great god Pan,
(Laughed while he sat by the river,)
'The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed.'
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
He blew in power by the river.

VI.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
Piercing sweet by the river!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
Came back to dream on the river.

VII.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man:
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,—
For the reed which grows nevermore again
As a reed with the reeds in the river.

FIRST NEWS FROM VILLAFRANCA.

I.

PEACE, peace, peace, do you say?
What!—with the enemy's guns in our ears?
With the country's wrong not rendered back?
What!—while Austria stands at bay
In Mantua, and our Venice bears
The cursed flag of the yellow and black?

II.

Peace, peace, peace, do you say?
And this the Mincio? Where 's the fleet,
And where 's the sea? Are we all blind
Or mad with the blood shed yesterday,
Ignoring Italy under our feet,
And seeing things before, behind?

III.

Peace, peace, peace, do you say?
What!—uncontested, undenied?
Because we triumph, we succumb?
A pair of Emperors stand in the way,
(One of whom is a man, beside)
To sign and seal our cannons dumb?

IV.

No, not Napoleon!—he who mused
At Paris, and at Milan spake,
And at Solferino led the fight:
Not he we trusted, honoured, used
Our hopes and hearts for . . till they break—
Even so, you tell us . . in his sight.

V.

Peace, peace, is still your word?
We say you lie then!—that is plain.
There *is* no peace, and shall be none.
Our very Dead would cry 'Absurd!'
And clamour that they died in vain,
And whine to come back to the sun.

VI.

Hush! more reverence for the Dead!
They've done the most for Italy
Evermore since the earth was fair.
Now would that *we* had died instead,
Still dreaming peace meant liberty,
And did not, could not mean despair.

VII.

Peace, you say?—yes, peace, in truth!
But such a peace as the ear can achieve
'Twixt the rifle's click and the rush of the ball,
'Twixt the tiger's spring and the crunch of the tooth,
'Twixt the dying atheist's negative
And God's Face—waiting, after all!

KING VICTOR EMANUEL ENTERING FLORENCE, APRIL, 1860.

I.

KING of us all, we cried to thee, cried to thee,
Trampled to earth by the beasts impure,
Dragged by the chariots which shame as they roll:
The dust of our torment far and wide to thee
Went up, dark'ning thy royal soul.
Be witness, Cavour,
That the King was sad for the people in thrall,
This King of us all!

II.

King, we cried to thee! Strong in replying,
Thy word and thy sword sprang rapid and sure,
Cleaving our way to a nation's place.
Oh, first soldier of Italy!—crying
Now grateful, exultant, we look in thy face.
Be witness, Cavour,
That, freedom's first soldier, the freed should call
First King of them all!

III.

This is our beautiful Italy's birthday;
High-thoughted souls, whether many or fewer,
Bring her the gift, and wish her the good,
While Heaven presents on this sunny earth-day
The noble King to the land renewed:
Be witness, Cavour!
Roar, cannon-mouths! Proclaim, install
The King of us all!

IV.

Grave he rides through the Florence gateway,
Clenching his face into calm, to immure
His struggling heart till it half disappears;
If he relaxed for a moment, straightway
He would break out into passionate tears—
(Be witness, Cavour!)
While rings the cry without interval,
"Live, King of us all!"

V.

Cry, free peoples! Honour the nation
By crowning the true man—and none is truer:
Pisa is here, and Livorno is here,
And thousands of faces, in wild exultation,
Burn over the windows to feel him near—
(Be witness, Cavour!)
Burn over from terrace, roof, window and wall,
On this King of us all.

VI.

Grave! A good man 's ever the graver
For bearing a nation's trust secure;
And *he*, he thinks of the Heart, beside,
Which broke for Italy, failing to save her,
And pining away by Oporto's tide:
Be witness, Cavour,
That he thinks of his vow on that royal pall,
This King of us all.

VII.

Flowers, flowers, from the flowery city!
Such innocent thanks for a deed so pure,
As, melting away for joy into flowers,
The nation invites him to enter his Pitti
And evermore reign in this Florence of ours.
Be witness, Cavour!
He 'll stand where the reptiles were used to crawl,
This King of us all.

VIII.

Grave, as the manner of noble men is—
Deeds unfinished will weigh on the doer:
And, baring his head to those crape-veiled flags,
He bows to the grief of the South and Venice.
Oh, riddle the last of the yellow to rags,
And swear by Cavour
That the King shall reign where the tyrants fall,
True King of us all!

THE SWORD OF CASTRUCCIO CASTRACANI.

"*Questa è per me.*"—KING VICTOR EMANUEL.

I.

WHEN Victor Emanuel the King,
Went down to his Lucca that day,
The people, each vaunting the thing
As he gave it, gave all things away,—
In a burst of fierce gratitude, say,
As they tore out their hearts for the King.

II.

—Gave the green forest-walk on the wall,
With the Apennine blue through the trees;
Gave the palaces, churches, and all
The great pictures which burn out of these:
But the eyes of the King seemed to freeze
As he gazed upon ceiling and wall.

III.

"Good," said the King as he passed.
Was he cold to the arts?—or else coy
To possession? or crossed, at the last,
(Whispered some) by the vote in Savoy?
Shout! Love him enough for his joy!
"Good," said the King as he passed.

IV.

He, travelling the whole day through flowers
And protesting amenities, found
At Pistoia, betwixt the two showers
Of red roses, the 'Orphans,' (renowned
As the heirs of Puccini) who wound
With a sword through the crowd and the flowers.

V.

"'Tis the sword of Castruccio, O King,—
In that strife of intestinal hate,
Very famous! Accept what we bring,
We who cannot be sons, by our fate,
Rendered citizens by thee of late,
And endowed with a country and king.

VI.

"Read! Puccini has willed that this sword
(Which once made in an ignorant feud
Many orphans) remain in our ward
Till some patriot its pure civic blood
Wipe away in the foe's and make good,
In delivering the land by the sword."

VII.

Then the King exclaimed, "This is for *me!*"
And he dashed out his hand on the hilt,
While his blue eye shot fire openly,
And his heart overboiled till it spilt
A hot prayer,—"God! the rest as Thou wilt!
But grant me this!—*This* is for *me.*"

VIII.

O Victor Emanuel, the King,
The sword is for *thee*, and the deed,
And nought for the alien, next spring,
Nought for Hapsburg and Bourbon agreed—
But, for us, a great Italy freed,
With a hero to head us,—our King!

SUMMING UP IN ITALY.

(INSCRIBED TO INTELLIGENT PUBLICS OUT OF IT.)

I.

OBSERVE how it will be at last,
When our Italy stands at full stature,
A year ago tied down so fast
That the cord cut the quick of her nature!
You'll honour the deed and its scope,
Then, in logical sequence upon it,
Will use up the remnants of rope
By hanging the men who have done it.

II.

The speech in the Commons, which hits you
A sketch off, how dungeons must feel,—
The official despatch, which commits you
From stamping out groans with your heel,—
Suggestions in journal or book for
Good efforts,—are praised as is meet:
But what in this world can men look for,
Who only achieve and complete?

III.

True, you 've praise for the fireman who sets his
Brave face to the axe of the flame,
Disappears in the smoke, and then fetches
A babe down, or idiot that's lame,—
For the boor even, who rescues through pity
A sheep from the brute who would kick it:
But saviours of nations!—'tis pretty,
And doubtful: they *may* be so wicked:

IV.

Azeglio, Farini, Mamiani,
Ricasoli,—doubt by the dozen!—here's
Pepoli too, and Cipriani,
Imperial cousins and cozeners—
Arese, Laiatico,—courtly
Of manners, if stringent of mouth:
Garibaldi! we'll come to him shortly,
(As soon as he *ends* in the South).

V.

Napoleon—as strong as ten armies,
Corrupt as seven devils—a fact
You accede to, then seek where the harm is
Drained off from the man to his act,
And find—a free nation! Suppose
Some hell-brood in Eden's sweet greenery,
Convoked for creating—a rose!
Would it suit the infernal machinery?

VI.

Cavour,—to the despot's desire,
Who his own thought so craftily marries—
What is he but just a thin wire
For conducting the lightning from Paris?
Yes, write down the two as compeers,
Confessing (you would not permit a lie)
He bore up his Piedmont ten years
Till she suddenly smiled and was Italy.

VII.

And the King, with that 'stain on his scutcheon,'*
Savoy—as the calumny runs;
(If it be not his blood,—with his clutch on
The sword, and his face to the guns.)
O first, where the battle-storm gathers,
O loyal of heart on the throne,
Let those keep the 'graves of their fathers,'
Who quail, in a nerve, from their own!

VIII.

For *thee*—through the dim Hades-portal
The dream of a voice—'Blessed thou
Who hast made all thy race twice immortal!
No need of the sepulchres now!
—Left to Bourbons and Hapsburgs, who fester
Above-ground with worm-eaten souls,
While the ghost of some pale feudal jester
Before them strews treaties in holes.'

* Blue Book. Diplomatical Correspondence.

IX.

But hush!—am I dreaming a poem
  Of Hades, Heaven, Justice? Not I;
I began too far off, in my proem,
  With what men believe and deny:
And on earth, whatsoever the need is,
  (To sum up as thoughtful reviewers)
The moral of every great deed is—
  The virtue of slandering the doers.

"DIED

(The 'Times' Obituary.)

I.

WHAT shall we add now? He is dead.
And I who praise and you who blame,
With wash of words across his name,
Find suddenly declared instead—
'*On Sunday, third of August, dead.*'

II.

Which stops the whole we talked today.
I, quickened to a plausive glance
At his large general tolerance
By common people's narrow way,
Stopped short in praising. Dead, they say.

III.

And you, who had just put in a sort
Of cold deduction—"rather, large
Through weakness of the continent marge,
Than greatness of the thing contained"—
Broke off. Dead!—there, you stood restrained.

IV.

As if we had talked in following one
Up some long gallery. 'Would you choose
An air like that? The gait is loose—
Or noble.' Sudden in the sun
An oubliette winks. Where *is* he? Gone.

V.

Dead. Man's 'I was' by God's 'I am'—
All hero-worship comes to that.
High heart, high thought, high fame, as flat
As a gravestone. Bring your *Jacet jam*—
The epitaph's an epigram.

VI.

Dead. There's an answer to arrest
All carping. Dust's his natural place?
He'll let the flies buzz round his face
And, though you slander, not protest?
—From such an one, exact the Best?

VII.

Opinions gold or brass are null.
We chuck our flattery or abuse,
Called Cæsar's due, as Charon's dues,
I' the teeth of some dead sage or fool,
To mend the grinning of a skull.

VIII.

Be abstinent in praise and blame.
The man's still mortal, who stands first,
And mortal only, if last and worst.
Then slowly lift so frail a fame,
Or softly drop so poor a shame.

THE FORCED RECRUIT.

SOLFERINO, 1859.

I.

IN the ranks of the Austrian you found him,
He died with his face to you all;
Yet bury him here where around him
You honour your bravest that fall.

II.

Venetian, fair-featured and slender,
He lies shot to death in his youth,
With a smile on his lips over-tender
For any mere soldier's dead mouth.

III.

No stranger, and yet not a traitor,
Though alien the cloth on his breast,
Underneath it how seldom a greater
Young heart, has a shot sent to rest!

IV.

By your enemy tortured and goaded
To march with them, stand in their file,
His musket (see) never was loaded,
He facing your guns with that smile!

V.

As orphans yearn on to their mothers,
He yearned to your patriot bands;—
'Let me die for our Italy, brothers,
If not in your ranks, by your hands!

VI.

'Aim straightly, fire steadily! spare me
A ball in the body which may
Deliver my heart here, and tear me
This badge of the Austrian away!'

VII.

So thought he, so died he this morning.
What then? many others have died.
Ay, but easy for men to die scorning
The death-stroke, who fought side by side—

VIII.

One tricolor floating above them;
Struck down 'mid triumphant acclaims
Of an Italy rescued to love them
And blazon the brass with their names.

IX.

But he,—without witness or honour,
Mixed, shamed in his country's regard,
With the tyrants who march in upon her,
Died faithful and passive: 'twas hard.

X.

'Twas sublime. In a cruel restriction
Cut off from the guerdon of sons,
With most filial obedience, conviction,
His soul kissed the lips of her guns.

XI.

That moves you? Nay, grudge not to show it,
While digging a grave for him here:
The others who died, says your poet,
Have glory,—let *him* have a tear.

GARIBALDI.

I.

He bent his head upon his breast
Wherein his lion-heart lay sick:—
'Perhaps we are not ill-repaid;
Perhaps this is not a true test;
Perhaps this was not a foul trick;
Perhaps none wronged, and none betrayed.

II.

'Perhaps the people's vote which here
United, there may disunite,
And both be lawful as they think;
Perhaps a patriot statesman, dear
For chartering nations, can with right
Disfranchise those who hold the ink.

III.

'Perhaps men's wisdom is not craft;
Men's greatness, not a selfish greed;
Men's justice, not the safer side;

Perhaps even women, when they laughed,
Wept, thanked us that the land was freed,
Not wholly (though they kissed us) lied.

IV.

'Perhaps no more than this we meant,
When up at Austria's guns we flew,
And quenched them with a cry apiece,
Italia!—Yet a dream was sent . .
The little house my father knew,
The olives and the palms of Nice.'

V.

He paused, and drew his sword out slow,
Then pored upon the blade intent,
As if to read some written thing;
While many murmured,—'He will go
In that despairing sentiment
And break his sword before the King.'

VI.

He poring still upon the blade,
His large lid quivered, something fell.
'Perhaps,' he said, 'I was not born
With such fine brains to treat and trade,—
And if a woman knew it well,
Her falsehood only meant her scorn.

VII.

'Yet through Varese's cannon-smoke
My eye saw clear: men feared this man
At Como, where this sword could seal
Death's protocol with every stroke:
And now . . the drop there scarcely can
Impair the keenness of the steel.

VIII.

'So man and sword may have their use;
And if the soil beneath my foot
In valour's act is forfeited,
I'll strike the harder, take my dues
Out nobler, and all loss confute
From ampler heavens above my head.

IX.

'My King, King Victor, I am thine!
So much Nice-dust as what I am
(To make our Italy) must cleave.
Forgive that.' Forward with a sign
He went.
You've seen the telegram?
Palermo's taken, we believe.

ONLY A CURL.

I.

Friends of faces unknown and a land
Unvisited over the sea,
Who tell me how lonely you stand
With a single gold curl in the hand
Held up to be looked at by me,—

II.

While you ask me to ponder and say
What a father and mother can do,
With the bright fellow-locks put away
Out of reach, beyond kiss, in the clay
Where the violets press nearer than you:

III.

Shall I speak like a poet, or run
Into weak woman's tears for relief?
Oh, children!—I never lost one,—
Yet my arm 's round my own little son,
And Love knows the secret of Grief.

IV.

And I feel what it must be and is,
When God draws a new angel so
Through the house of a man up to His,
With a murmur of music, you miss,
And a rapture of light, you forgo.

V.

How you think, staring on at the door,
Where the face of your angel flashed in,
That its brightness, familiar before,
Burns off from you ever the more
For the dark of your sorrow and sin.

VI.

'God lent him and takes him,' you sigh;
—Nay, there let me break with your pain:
God's generous in giving, say I,—
And the thing which He gives, I deny
That He ever can take back again.

VII.

He gives what He gives. I appeal
To all who bear babes—in the hour
When the veil of the body we feel
Rent round us,—while torments reveal
The motherhood's advent in power,

VIII.

And the babe cries!—has each of us known
By apocalypse (God being there
Full in nature) the child is our own,
Life of life, love of love, moan of moan,
Through all changes, all times, everywhere.

IX.

He's ours and for ever. Believe,
O father!—O mother, look back
To the first love's assurance! To give
Means with God not to tempt or deceive
With a cup thrust in Benjamin's sack.

X.

He gives what He gives. Be content!
He resumes nothing given,—be sure!
God lend? Where the usurers lent
In His temple, indignant He went
And scourged away all those impure.

XI.

He lends not; but gives to the end,
As He loves to the end. If it seem
That He draws back a gift, comprehend
'Tis to add to it rather,—amend,
And finish it up to your dream,—

XII.

Or keep,—as a mother will toys
Too costly, though given by herself,
Till the room shall be stiller from noise,
And the children more fit for such joys,
Kept over their heads on the shelf.

XIII.

So look up, friends! you, who indeed
Have possessed in your house a sweet piece
Of the Heaven which men strive for, must need
Be more earnest than others are,—speed
Where they loiter, persist where they cease.

XIV.

You know how one angel smiles there.
Then weep not. 'Tis easy for you
To be drawn by a single gold hair
Of that curl, from earth's storm and despair,
To the safe place above us. Adieu.

A VIEW ACROSS THE ROMAN CAMPAGNA.

1861.

I.

Over the dumb Campagna-sea,
Out in the offing through mist and rain,
Saint Peter's Church heaves silently
Like a mighty ship in pain,
Facing the tempest with struggle and strain.

II.

Motionless waifs of ruined towers,
Soundless breakers of desolate land:
The sullen surf of the mist devours
That mountain-range upon either hand,
Eaten away from its outline grand.

III.

And over the dumb Campagna-sea
Where the ship of the Church heaves on to wreck,
Alone and silent as God must be,
The Christ walks. Ay, but Peter's neck
Is stiff to turn on the foundering deck.

IV.

Peter, Peter! if such be thy name,
Now leave the ship for another to steer,
And proving thy faith evermore the same,
Come forth, tread out through the dark and drear,
Since He who walks on the sea is here.

V.

Peter, Peter! He does not speak;
He is not as rash as in old Galilee:
Safer a ship, though it toss and leak,
Than a reeling foot on a rolling sea!
And he's got to be round in the girth, thinks he.

VI.

Peter, Peter! He does not stir;
His nets are heavy with silver fish;
He reckons his gains, and is keen to infer
—'The broil on the shore, if the Lord should wish;
But the sturgeon goes to the Cæsar's dish.'

VII.

Peter, Peter! thou fisher of men,
Fisher of fish wouldst thou live instead?
Haggling for pence with the other Ten,
Cheating the market at so much a head,
Griping the Bag of the traitor Dead?

VIII.

At the triple crow of the Gallic cock
Thou weep'st not, thou, though thine eyes be dazed:
What bird comes next in the tempest-shock?
—Vultures! see,—as when Romulus gazed,—
To inaugurate Rome for a world amazed!

THE KING'S GIFT.

I.

TERESA, ah, Teresita!
Now what has the messenger brought her,
Our Garibaldi's young daughter,
To make her stop short in her singing?
Will she not once more repeat a
Verse from that hymn of our hero's,
Setting the souls of us ringing?
Break off the song where the tear rose?
Ah, Teresita!

II.

A young thing, mark, is Teresa:
Her eyes have caught fire, to be sure, in
That necklace of jewels from Turin,
Till blind their regard to us men is.
But still she remembers to raise a
Sly look to her father, and note—
'Could she sing on as well about Venice,
Yet wear such a flame at her throat?
Decide for Teresa.'

III.

Teresa, ah, Teresita!
His right hand has paused on her head—
'Accept it, my daughter,' he said;
'Ay, wear it, true child of thy mother!
Then sing, till all start to their feet, a
New verse ever bolder and freer!
King Victor's no king like another,
But verily noble as *we* are,
Child, Teresita!'

PARTING LOVERS.

SIENA, 1860.

I.

I LOVE thee, love thee, Giulio;
Some call me cold, and some demure;
And if thou hast ever guessed that so
I loved thee . . well, the proof was poor,
And no one could be sure.

II.

Before thy song (with shifted rhymes
To suit my name) did I undo
The persian? If it stirred sometimes,
Thou hast not seen a hand push through
A foolish flower or two.

III.

My mother listening to my sleep,
Heard nothing but a sigh at night,—
The short sigh rippling on the deep,
When hearts run out of breath and sight
Of men, to God's clear light.

IV.

When others named thee,—thought thy brows
Were straight, thy smile was tender,—'Here
He comes between the vineyard-rows!'
I said not 'Ay,' nor waited, Dear,
To feel thee step too near.

V.

I left such things to bolder girls,—
Olivia or Clotilda. Nay,
When that Clotilda, through her curls,
Held both thine eyes in hers one day,
I marvelled, let me say.

VI.

I could not try the woman's trick:
Between us straightway fell the blush
Which kept me separate, blind and sick.
A wind came with thee in a flush,
As blown through Sinai's bush.

VII.

But now that Italy invokes
Her young men to go forth and chase
The foe or perish,—nothing chokes
My voice, or drives me from the place.
I look thee in the face.

VIII.

I love thee! It is understood,
Confest: I do not shrink or start.
No blushes! all my body's blood
Has gone to greaten this poor heart,
That, loving, we may part.

IX.

Our Italy invokes the youth
To die if need be. Still there 's room,
Though earth is strained with dead in truth:
Since twice the lilies were in bloom
They have not grudged a tomb.

X.

And many a plighted maid and wife
And mother, who can say since then
'My country,'—cannot say through life
'My son,' 'my spouse,' 'my flower of men,'
And not weep dumb again.

XI.

Heroic males the country bears,—
But daughters give up more than sons:
Flags wave, drums beat, and unawares
You flash your souls out with the guns,
And take your Heaven at once.

XII.

But we!—we empty heart and home
Of life's life, love! We bear to think
You're gone,—to feel you may not come,—
To hear the door-latch stir and clink,
Yet no more you! . . nor sink.

XIII.

Dear God! when Italy is one,
Complete, content from bound to bound,
Suppose, for my share, earth's undone
By one grave in 't!—as one small wound
Will kill a man, 'tis found.

XIV.

What then? If love's delight must end,
At least we'll clear its truth from flaws.
I love thee, love thee, sweetest friend!
Now take my sweetest without pause,
And help the nation's cause.

XVI.

And thus, of noble Italy
We'll both be worthy! Let her show
The future how we made her free,
Not sparing life . . nor Giulio,
Nor this . . this heartbreak! Go.

MOTHER AND POET.

TURIN, AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA, 1861.

I.

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea in the east,
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.
Dead! both my boys! When you sit at the feast
And are wanting a great song for Italy free,
Let none look at *me!*

II.

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
And good at my art, for a woman, men said;
But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonized here,
—The east sea and west sea rhyme on in her head
For ever instead.

III.

What art can a woman be good at? Oh, vain!
What art *is* she good at, but hurting her breast
With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile at the pain?

Ah, boys, how you hurt! you were strong as you pressed,
And I proud, by that test.

IV.

What art 's for a woman? To hold on her knees
Both darlings! to feel all their arms round her throat,
Cling, strangle a little! to sew by degrees
And 'broider the long-clothes and neat little coat;
To dream and to doat.

V.

To teach them . . It stings there! *I* made them indeed
Speak plain the word *country*. *I* taught them, no doubt,
That a country's a thing men should die for at need.
I prated of liberty, rights, and about
The tyrant cast out.

VI.

And when their eyes flashed . . O my beautiful eyes! . .
I exulted; nay, let them go forth at the wheels
Of the guns, and denied not. But then the surprise
When one sits quite alone! Then one weeps, then one kneels!
God, how the house feels!

VII.

At first, happy news came, in gay letters moiled
With my kisses,—of camp-life and glory, and how
They both loved me; and, soon coming home to be spoiled,
In return would fan off every fly from my brow
With their geen laurel-bough.

VIII.

Then was triumph at Turin: 'Ancona was free!'
And some one came out of the cheers in the street,
With a face pale as stone, to say something to me.
My Guido was dead! I fell down at his feet,
While they cheered in the street.

IX.

I bore it; friends soothed me; my grief looked sublime
As the ransom of Italy. One boy remained
To be leant on and walked with, recalling the time
When the first grew immortal, while both of us strained
To the height he had gained.

X.

And letters still came, shorter, sadder, more strong,
Writ now but in one hand, 'I was not to faint,—
One loved me for two—would be with me ere long:
And *Viva l'Italia!—he* died for, our saint,
Who forbids our complaint.'

XI.

My Nanni would add, 'he was safe, and aware
Of a presence that turned off the balls,—was imprest
It was Guido himself, who knew what I could bear,
And how 'twas impossible, quite dispossessed,
To live on for the rest.'

XII.

On which, without pause, up the telegraph-line
Swept smoothly the next news from Gaeta:—*Shot.*
Tell his mother. Ah, ah, 'his,' 'their' mother,—not
'mine,'
No voice says '*My* mother' again to me. What!
You think Guido forgot?

XIII.

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy with Heaven,
They drop earth's affections, conceive not of woe?
I think not. Themselves were too lately forgiven
Through THAT Love and Sorrow which reconciled so
The Above and Below.

XIV.

O Christ of the five wounds, who look'dst through the
dark
To the face of Thy mother! consider, I pray,
How we common mothers stand desolate, mark,
Whose sons, not being Christs, die with eyes turned
away,
And no last word to say!

XV.

Both boys dead? but that's out of nature. We all
Have been patriots, yet each house must always
keep one.
'Twere imbecile, hewing out roads to a wall;
And, when Italy's made, for what end is it done
If we have not a son?

XVI.

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken, what then?
When the fair wicked queen sits no more at her
sport
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out of men?
When the guns of Cavalli with final retort
Have cut the game short?

XVII.

When Venice and Rome keep their new jubilee,
When your flag takes all heaven for its white, green
and red,
When *you* have your country from mountain to sea,
When King Victor has Italy's crown on his head,
(And *I* have my Dead)—

XVIII.

What then? Do not mock me. Ah, ring your bells
low,
And burn your lights faintly! *My* country is *there*,
Above the star pricked by the last peak of snow:
My Italy's THERE, with my brave civic Pair,
To disfranchise despair!

XIX.

Forgive me. Some women bear children in strength,
And bite back the cry of their pain in self-scorn;
But the birth-pangs of nations will wring us at length
Into wail such as this—and we sit on forlorn
When the man-child is born.

XX.

Dead! One of them shot by the sea in the east,
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.
Both! both my boys! If in keeping the feast
You want a great song for your Italy free,
Let none look at *me!*

[This was Laura Savio, of Turin, a poetess and patriot, whose sons were killed at Ancona and Gaeta.]

NATURE'S REMORSES.

ROME, 1861.

I.

HER soul was bred by a throne, and fed
From the sucking-bottle used in her race
On starch and water (for mother's milk
Which gives a larger growth instead),
And, out of the natural liberal grace,
Was swaddled away in violet silk.

II.

And young and kind, and royally blind,
Forth she stepped from her palace-door
On three-piled carpet of compliments,
Curtains of incense drawn by the wind·
In between her for evermore
And daylight issues of events.

III.

On she drew, as a queen might do,
To meet a Dream of Italy,—
Of magical town and musical wave,
Where even a god, his amulet blue
Of shining sea, in an ecstasy
Dropt and forgot in a nereid's cave.

IV.

Down she goes, as the soft wind blows,
To live more smoothly than mortals can,
To love and to reign as queen and wife,
To wear a crown that smells of a rose,
And still, with a sceptre as light as a fan,
Beat sweet time to the song of life.

V.

What is this? As quick as a kiss
Falls the smile from her girlish mouth!
The lion-people has left its lair,
Roaring along her garden of bliss,
And the fiery underworld of the South
Scorched a way to the upper air.

VI.

And a fire-stone ran in the form of a man,
Burningly, boundingly, fatal and fell,
Bowling the kingdom down! Where was the King?
She had heard somewhat, since life began,
Of terrors on earth and horrors in hell,
But never, never of such a thing.

VII.

You think she dropped when her dream was stopped,
When the blotch of Bourbon blood inlay,
Lividly rank, her new lord's cheek?
Not so. Her high heart overtopped
The royal part she had come to play.
Only the men in that hour were weak.

VIII.

And twice a wife by her ravaged life,
And twice a queen by her kingdom lost,
She braved the shock and the counter-shock
Of hero and traitor, bullet and knife,
While Italy pushed, like a vengeful ghost,
That son of the Cursed from Gaeta's rock.

IX.

What will ye give her, who could not deliver,
German Princesses? A laurel-wreath
All over-scored with your signatures,
Graces, Serenities, Highnesses ever?
Mock her not, fresh from the truth of Death,
Conscious of dignities higher than yours.

X.

What will ye put in your casket shut,
Ladies of Paris, in sympathy's name?
Guizot's daughter, what have you brought her?
Withered immortelles, long ago cut
For guilty dynasties perished in shame,
Putrid to memory, Guizot's daughter?

XI.

Ah poor queen! so young and serene!
What shall we do for her, now hope 's done,
Standing at Rome in these ruins old,
She too a ruin and no more a queen?
Leave her that diadem made by the sun
Turning her hair to an innocent gold.

XII.

Ay! bring close to her, as 'twere a rose, to her,
Yon free child from an Apennine city
Singing for Italy,—dumb in the place!
Something like solace, let us suppose, to her
Given, in that homage of wonder and pity,
By his pure eyes to her beautiful face.

XIII.

Nature, excluded, savagely brooded;
Ruined all queendom and dogmas of state:
Then, in reaction remorseful and mild,
Rescues the womanhood, nearly eluded,
Shows her what 's sweetest in womanly fate—
Sunshine from Heaven, and the eyes of a child.

THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH.

[The Last Poem.]

Rome, May, 1861.

I.

'Now give us lands where the olives grow,'
Cried the North to the South,
'Where the sun with a golden mouth can blow
Blue bubbles of grapes down a vineyard-row!'
Cried the North to the South.

'Now give us men from the sunless plain,'
Cried the South to the North,
'By need of work in the snow and the rain,
Made strong, and brave by familiar pain!'
Cried the South to the North.

II.

'Give lucider hills and intenser seas,'
Said the North to the South,

'Since ever by symbols and bright degrees
Art, childlike, climbs to the dear Lord's knees,'
Said the North to the South.

'Give strenuous souls for belief and prayer,'
Said the South to the North,
'That stand in the dark on the lowest stair,
While affirming of God, 'He is certainly there,''
Said the South to the North.

III.

'Yet oh, for the skies that are softer and higher!'
Sighed the North to the South;
'For the flowers that blaze, and the trees that aspire,
And the insects made of a song or a fire!'
Sighed the North to the South.

'And oh, for a seer to discern the same!'
Sighed the South to the North;
'For a poet's tongue of baptismal flame,
To call the tree or the flower by its name!'
Sighed the South to the North.

IV.

The North sent therefore a man of men
As a grace to the South;
And thus to Rome came Andersen.
—*'Alas, but must you take him again?'*
Said the South to the North.

TRANSLATIONS.

TRANSLATIONS.

FROM THEOCRITUS.

THE CYCLOPS.

(Idyl XI.)

And so an easier life our Cyclops drew,
The ancient Polyphemus, who in youth
Loved Galatea while the manhood grew
Adown his cheeks and darkened round his mouth.
No jot he cared for apples, olives, roses;
Love made him mad: the whole world was neglected,
The very sheep went backward to their closes
From out the fair green pastures, self-directed.
And singing Galatea, thus, he wore
The sunrise down along the weedy shore,
And pined alone, and felt the cruel wound
Beneath his heart, which Cypris' arrow bore,
With a deep pang; but, so, the cure was found;
And sitting on a lofty rock he cast

His eyes upon the sea, and sang at last:—
'O whitest Galatea, can it be
That thou shouldst spurn me off who love thee so?
More white than curds, my girl, thou art to see,
More meek than lambs, more full of leaping glee
Than kids, and brighter than the early glow
On grapes that swell to ripen,—sour like thee!
Thou comest to me with the fragrant sleep,
And with the fragrant sleep thou goest from me;
Thou fliest . . fliest, as a frightened sheep
Flies the grey wolf!—yet Love did overcome me,
So long;—I loved thee, maiden, first of all
When down the hills (my mother fast beside thee)
I saw thee stray to pluck the summer-fall
Of hyacinth bells, and went myself to guide thee:
And since my eyes have seen thee, they can leave thee
No more, from that day's light! But thou . . by Zeus,
Thou wilt not care for *that*, to let it grieve thee!
I know thee, fair one, why thou springest loose
From my arm round thee. Why? I tell thee, Dear!
One shaggy eyebrow draws its smudging road
Straight through my ample front, from ear to ear,—
One eye rolls underneath; and yawning, broad
Flat nostrils feel the bulging lips too near.
Yet . . ho, ho!—*I*,—whatever I appear,—
Do feed a thousand oxen! When I have done,
I milk the cows, and drink the milk that 's best!
I lack no cheese, while summer keeps the sun;

And after, in the cold, it 's ready prest!
And then, I know to sing, as there is none
Of all the Cyclops can, . . a song of thee,
Sweet apple of my soul, on love's fair tree,
And of myself who love thee . . till the West
Forgets the light, and all but I have rest.
I feed for thee, besides, eleven fair does,
And all in fawn; and four tame whelps of bears.
Come to me, Sweet! thou shalt have all of those
In change for love! I will not halve the shares.
Leave the blue sea, with pure white arms extended
To the dry shore; and, in my cave's recess,
Thou shalt be gladder for the noonlight ended,—
For here be laurels, spiral cypresses,
Dark ivy, and a vine whose leaves enfold
Most luscious grapes; and here is water cold,
The wooded Ætna pours down through the trees
From the white snows,—which gods were scarce too bold
To drink in turn with nectar. Who with these
Would choose the salt wave of the lukewarm seas?
Nay, look on me! If I am hairy and rough,
I have an oak's heart in me; there 's a fire
In these grey ashes which burns hot enough;
And when I burn for *thee*, I grudge the pyre
No fuel . . not my soul, nor this one eye,—
Most precious thing I have, because thereby
I see thee, Fairest! Out, alas! I wish
My mother had borne me finnëd like a fish,

That I might plunge down in the ocean near thee,
And kiss thy glittering hand between the weeds,
If still thy face were turned; and I would bear the
Each lily white, and poppy fair that bleeds
Its red heart down its leaves!—one gift, for hours
Of summer,—one, for winter; since, to cheer thee
I could not bring at once all kinds of flowers.
Even now, girl, now, I fain would learn to swim,
If stranger in a ship sailed nigh, I wis,—
That I may know how sweet a thing it is
To live down with you, in the Deep and Dim!
Come up, O Galatea, from the ocean,
And having come, forget again to go!
As I, who sing out here my heart's emotion,
Could sit for ever. Come up from below!
Come, keep my flocks beside me, milk my kine,—
Come, press my cheese, distrain my whey and curd
Ah, mother! she alone . . that mother of mine . .
Did wrong me sore! I blame her!—Not a word
Of kindly intercession did she address
Thine ear with for my sake; and ne'ertheless
She saw me wasting, wasting, day by day:
Both head and feet were aching, I will say,
All sick for grief, as I myself was sick.
O Cyclops, Cyclops, whither hast thou sent
Thy soul on fluttering wings? If thou wert bent
On turning bowls, or pulling green and thick
The sprouts to give thy lambkins,—thou wouldst
make thee

A wiser Cyclops than for what we take thee.
Milk dry the present! Why pursue too quick
That future which is fugitive aright?
Thy Galatea thou shalt haply find,—
Or else a maiden fairer and more kind;
For many girls do call me through the night,
And, as they call, do laugh out silverly.
I, too, am something in the world, I see!'

While thus the Cyclops love and lambs did fold,
Ease came with song, he could not buy with gold.

FROM APULEIUS.

PSYCHE GAZING ON CUPID.

(METAMORPH., Lib. IV.)

THEN Psyche, weak in body and soul, put on
The cruelty of Fate, in place of strength:
She raised the lamp to see what should be done,
And seized the steel, and was a man at length
In courage, though a woman! Yes, but when
The light fell on the bed whereby she stood
To view the '*beast*' that lay there,—certes, then,
She saw the gentlest, sweetest beast in wood—
Even Cupid's self, the beauteous god! more beauteous
For that sweet sleep across his eyelids dim.
The light, the lady carried as she viewed,
Did blush for pleasure as it lighted him,
The dagger trembled from its aim unduteous;
And *she* . . oh, *she*—amazed and soul-distraught,

And fainting in her whiteness like a veil,
Slid down upon her knees, and, shuddering, thought
To hide—though in her heart—the dagger pale!
She would have done it, but her hands did fail
To hold the guilty steel, they shivered so,—
And feeble, exhausted, unawares she took
To gazing on the god,—till, look by look,
Her eyes with larger life did fill and glow.
She saw his golden head alight with curls,—
She might have guessed their brightness in the dark
By that ambrosial smell of heavenly mark!
She saw the milky brow, more pure than pearls,
The purple of the cheeks, divinely sundered
By the globed ringlets, as they glided free,
Some back, some forwards,—all so radiantly,
That, as she watched them there, she never wondered
To see the lamplight, where it touched them, tremble:
On the god's shoulders, too, she marked his wings
Shine faintly at the edges and resemble
A flower that 's near to blow. The poet sings
And lover sighs, that Love is fugitive;
And certes, though these pinions lay reposing,
The feathers on them seemed to stir and live
As if by instinct, closing and unclosing.
Meantime the god's fair body slumbered deep,
All worthy of Venus, in his shining sleep;
While at the bed's foot lay the quiver, bow,

And darts,—his arms of godhead. Psyche gazed
With eyes that drank the wonders in,—said,—"Lo,
Be these my husband's arms?"—and straightway raised
An arrow from the quiver-case, and tried
Its point against her finger,—trembling till
She pushed it in too deeply (foolish bride!)
And made her blood some dewdrops small distil,
And learnt to love Love, of her own goodwill.

PSYCHE WAFTED BY ZEPHYRUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. IV.)

WHILE Psyche wept upon the rock forsaken,
Alone, despairing, dreading,—gradually
By Zephyrus she was enwrapt and taken
Still trembling,—like the lilies planted high,—
Through all her fair white limbs. Her vesture spread,
Her very bosom eddying with surprise,—
He drew her slowly from the mountain-head,
And bore her down the valleys with wet eyes,
And laid her in the lap of a green dell
As soft with grass and flowers as any nest,
With trees beside her, and a limpid well:
Yet Love was not far off from all that Rest.

PSYCHE AND PAN.

(METAMORPH., Lib. V.)

THE gentle River, in her Cupid's honour,
Because he used to warm the very wave,
Did ripple aside, instead of closing on her,
And cast up Psyche, with a refluence brave,
Upon the flowery bank,—all sad and sinning.
Then Pan, the rural god, by chance was leaning
Along the brow of waters as they wound,
Kissing the reed-nymph till she sank to ground,
And teaching, without knowledge of the meaning,
To run her voice in music after his
Down many a shifting note; (the goats around,
In wandering pasture and most leaping bliss,
Drawn on to crop the river's flowery hair.)
And as the hoary god beheld her there,
The poor, worn, fainting Psyche!—knowing all
The grief she suffered, he did gently call
Her name, and softly comfort her despair:—

...

"O wise, fair lady, I am rough and rude,
And yet experienced through my weary age!
And if I read aright, as soothsayer should,
Thy faltering steps of heavy pilgrimage,
Thy paleness, deep as snow we cannot see

The roses through,—thy sighs of quick returning,
Thine eyes that seem, themselves, two souls in mourning,—
Thou lovest, girl, too well, and bitterly!
But hear me: rush no more to a headlong fall:
Seek no more deaths! leave wail, lay sorrow down,
And pray the sovran god; and use withal
Such prayer as best may suit a tender youth,
Well-pleased to bend to flatteries from thy mouth
And feel them stir the myrtle of his crown."

—So spake the shepherd-god; and answer none
Gave Psyche in return: but silently
She did him homage with a bended knee,
And took the onward path.—

PSYCHE PROPITIATING CERES.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN mother Ceres from afar beheld her,
While Psyche touched, with reverent fingers meek,
The temple's scythes; and with a cry compelled her:—
"O wretched Psyche, Venus roams to seek
Thy wandering footsteps round the weary earth,
Anxious and maddened, and adjures thee forth
To accept the imputed pang, and let her wreak
Full vengeance with full force of deity!

"Yet *thou*, forsooth, art in my temple here,
Touching my scythes, assuming my degree,
And daring to have thoughts that are not fear!"
—But Psyche clung to her feet, and as they moved
Rained tears along their track, tear, dropped on tear,
And drew the dust on in her trailing locks,
And still, with passionate prayer, the charge disproved:—
"Now, by thy right hand's gathering from the shocks
Of golden corn,—and by thy gladsome rites
Of harvest,—and thy consecrated sights
Shut safe and mute in chests,—and by the course
Of thy slave-dragons,—and the driving force
Of ploughs along Sicilian glebes profound,—
By thy swift chariot,—by thy steadfast ground,—
By all those nuptial torches that departed
With thy lost daughter,—and by those that shone
Back with her, when she came again glad-hearted,—
And by all other mysteries which are done
In silence at Eleusis,—I beseech thee,
O Ceres, take some pity, and abstain
From giving to my soul extremer pain
Who am the wretched Psyche! Let me teach thee
A little mercy, and have thy leave to spend
A few days only in thy garnered corn,
Until that wrathful goddess, at the end,
Shall feel her hate grow mild, the longer borne,—
Or till, alas!—this faintness at my breast
Pass from me, and my spirit apprehend

From life-long woe a breath-time hour of rest!"
—But Ceres answered, "I am moved indeed
By prayers so moist with tears, and would defend
The poor beseecher from more utter need:
But where old oaths, anterior ties, commend,
I cannot fail to a sister, lie to a friend,
As Venus is to *me*. Depart with speed!"

PSYCHE AND THE EAGLE.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

BUT sovran Jove's rapacious Bird, the regal
High percher on the lightning, the great eagle
Drove down with rushing wings; and,—thinking how,
By Cupid's help, he bore from Ida's brow
A cup-boy for his master,—he inclined
To yield, in just return, an influence kind;
The god being honoured in his lady's woe.
And thus the Bird wheeled downward from the track,
Gods follows gods in, to the level low
Of that poor face of Psyche left in wrack.
—"Now fie, thou simple girl!" the Bird began;
"For if thou think to steal and carry back
A drop of holiest stream that ever ran,
No simpler thought, methinks, were found in man.
What! know'st thou not these Stygian waters be
Most holy, even to Jove? that as, on earth,

"Men swear by gods, and by the thunder's worth,
Even so the heavenly gods do utter forth
Their oaths by Styx's flowing majesty?
And yet, one little urnful, I agree
To grant thy need!" Whereat, all hastily,
He takes it, fills it from the willing wave,
And bears it in his beak, incarnadined
By the last Titan-prey he screamed to have;
And, striking calmly out, against the wind,
Vast wings on each side,—there, where Psyche stands,
He drops the urn down in her lifted hands.

PSYCHE AND CERBERUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

A MIGHTY dog with three colossal necks,
And heads in grand proportion; vast as fear,
With jaws that bark the thunder out that breaks
In most innocuous dread for ghosts anear,
Who are safe in death from sorrow: he reclines
Across the threshold of queen Proserpine's
Dark-sweeping halls, and, there, for Pluto's spouse,
Doth guard the entrance of the empty house.
When Psyche threw the cake to him, once amain
He howled up wildly from his hunger-pain,
And was still, after.—

PSYCHE AND PROSERPINE.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN Psyche entered in to Proserpine
In the dark house, and straightway did decline
With meek denial the luxurious seat,
The liberal board for welcome strangers spread,
But sate down lowly at the dark queen's feet,
And told her tale, and brake her oaten bread,
And when she had given the pyx in humble duty,
And told how Venus did entreat the queen
To fill it up with only one day's beauty
She used in Hades, star-bright and serene,
To beautify the Cyprian, who had been
All spoilt with grief in nursing her sick boy,—
Then Proserpine, in malice and in joy,
Smiled in the shade, and took the pyx, and put
A secret in it; and so, filled and shut,
Gave it again to Psyche. Could she tell
It held no beauty, but a dream of hell?

PSYCHE AND VENUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

AND Psyche brought to Venus what was sent
By Pluto's spouse; the paler, that she went
So low to seek it, down the dark descent.

MERCURY CARRIES PSYCHE TO OLYMPUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN Jove commanded the god Mercury
To float up Psyche from the earth. And she
Sprang at the first word, as the fountain springs,
And shot up bright and rustling through his wings.

MARRIAGE OF PSYCHE AND CUPID.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

AND Jove's right-hand approached the ambrosial bowl
To Psyche's lips, that scarce dared yet to smile,—
"Drink, O my daughter, and acquaint thy soul

With deathless uses, and be glad the while!
No more shall Cupid leave thy lovely side;
Thy marriage-joy begins for never-ending."
While yet he spake,—the nuptial feast supplied,—
The bridegroom on the festive couch was bending
O'er Psyche in his bosom—Jove, the same,
On Juno, and the other deities,
Alike ranged round. The rural cup-boy came
And poured Jove's nectar out with shining eyes,
While Bacchus, for the others, did as much,
And Vulcan spread the meal; and all the Hours
Made all things purple with a sprinkle of flowers,
Or roses chiefly, not to say the touch
Of their sweet fingers; and the Graces glided
Their balm around, and the Muses, through the air,
Struck out clear voices, which were still divided
By that divinest song Apollo there
Intoned to his lute; while Aphroditè fair
Did float her beauty along the tune, and play
The notes right with her feet. And thus, the day
Through every perfect mood of joy was carried.
The Muses sang their chorus; Satyrus
Did blow his pipes; Pan touched his reed;—and thus
At last were Cupid and his Psyche married.

FROM NONNUS.

HOW BACCHUS FINDS ARIADNE SLEEPING.

(DIONYSIACA, Lib. XLVII.)

WHEN Bacchus first beheld the desolate
And sleeping Ariadne, wonder straight
Was mixed with love in his great golden eyes;
He turned to his Bacchantes in surprise,
And said with guarded voice,—"Hush! strike no more
Your brazen cymbals; keep those voices still
Of voice and pipe; and since ye stand before
Queen Cypris, let her slumber as she will!
And yet the cestus is not here in proof.
A Grace, perhaps, whom sleep has stolen aloof:
In which case, as the morning shines in view,
Wake this Aglaia!—yet in Naxos, who
Would veil a Grace so? Hush! And if that she
Were Hebe, which of all the gods can be

The pourer-out of wine? or if we think
She 's like the shining moon by ocean's brink,
The guide of herds,—why, could she sleep without
Endymion's breath on her cheek? or if I doubt
Of silver-footed Thetis, used to tread
These shores,—even *she* (in reverence be it said)
Has no such rosy beauty to dress deep
With the blue waves. The Loxian goddess might
Repose so from her hunting-toil aright
Beside the sea, since toil gives birth to sleep,
But who would find her with her tunic loose,
Thus? Stand off, Thracian! stand off! Do not leap,
Not this way! Leave that piping, since I choose,
O dearest Pan, and let Athenè rest!
And yet if she be Pallas . . truly guessed . .
Her lance is—where? her helm and ægis—where?"
—As Bacchus closed, the miserable Fair
Awoke at last, sprang upward from the sands,
And gazing wild on that wild throng that stands
Around, around her, and no Theseus there!—
Her voice went moaning over shore and sea,
Beside the halcyon's cry; she called her love;
She named her hero, and raged maddeningly
Against the brine of waters; and above,
Sought the ship's track, and cursed the hours she slept;
And still the chiefest execration swept
Against queen Paphia, mother of the ocean;
And cursed and prayed by times in her emotion

The winds all round. . . . . .

. . . . . .

Her grief did make her glorious; her despair
Adorned her with its weight. Poor wailing child!
She looked like Venus when the goddess smiled
At liberty of godship, debonair;
Poor Ariadne! and her eyelids fair
Hid looks beneath them lent her by Persuasion
And every Grace, with tears of Love's own passion.
She wept long; then she spake:—"Sweet sleep did come
While sweetest Theseus went. O, glad and dumb,
I wish he had left me still! for in my sleep
I saw his Athens, and did gladly keep
My new bride-state within my Theseus' hall;
And heard the pomp of Hymen, and the call
Of 'Ariadne, Ariadne,' sung
In choral joy; and there, with joy I hung
Spring-blossoms round love's altar!—ay, and wore
A wreath myself; and felt *him* evermore,
Oh, evermore beside me, with his mighty
Grave head bowed down in prayer to Aphroditè!
Why, what a sweet, sweet dream! *He* went with it,
And left me here unwedded where I sit!
Persuasion help me! The dark night did make me
A brideship, the fair morning takes away;
My Love had left me when the Hour did wake me;
And while I dreamed of marriage, as I say,
And blest it well, my blessëd Theseus left me:

And thus the sleep, I loved so, has bereft me.
Speak to me, rocks, and tell thy grief to-day,
Who stole my love of Athens?" . . . .

HOW BACCHUS COMFORTS ARIADNE.

(DIONYSIACA, Lib. XLVII.)

THEN Bacchus' subtle speech her sorrow crossed:—
"O maiden, dost thou mourn for having lost
The false Athenian heart? and dost thou still
Take thought of Theseus, when thou may'st at will
Have Bacchus for a husband? Bacchus bright!
A god in place of mortal! Yes, and though
The mortal youth be charming in thy sight,
That man of Athens cannot strive below,
In beauty and valour, with my deity!
Thou 'lt tell me of the labyrinthine dweller,
The fierce man-bull he slew: I pray thee, be,
Fair Ariadne, the true deed's true teller,
And mention thy clue's help! because, forsooth,
Thine armed Athenian hero had not found
A power to fight on that prodigious ground,
Unless a lady in her rosy youth
Had lingered near him: not to speak the truth
Too definitely out till names be known—
Like Paphia's—Love's—and Ariadne's own.

Thou wilt not say that Athens can compare
With Æther, nor that Minos rules like Zeus,
Nor yet that Gnossus has such golden air
As high Olympus. Ha! for noble use
We came to Naxos! Love has well intended
To change thy bridegroom! Happy thou, defended
From entering in thy Theseus' earthly hall,
That thou may'st hear the laughters rise and fall
Instead, where Bacchus rules! Or wilt thou choose
A still-surpassing glory?—take it all,—
A heavenly house, Kronion's self for kin,—
A place where Cassiopea sits within
Inferior light, for all her daughter's sake,
Since Perseus, even amid the stars, must take
Andromeda in chains æthereal!
"But *I* will wreathe *thee*, sweet, an astral crown,
And as my queen and spouse thou shalt be known—
Mine, the crown-lover's!" Thus, at length, he proved
His comfort on her; and the maid was moved;
And casting Theseus' memory down the brine,
She straight received the troth of her divine
Fair Bacchus; Love stood by to close the rite;
The marriage-chorus struck up clear and light,
Flowers sprouted fast about the chamber green,
And with spring-garlands on their heads, I ween,
The Orchomenian dancers came along
And danced their rounds in Naxos to the song.
A Hamadryad sang a nuptial dit
Right shrilly: and a Naiad sat beside

A fountain, with her bare foot shelving it,
And hymned of Ariadne, beauteous bride,
Whom thus the god of grapes had deified.
Ortygia sang but louder than her wont,
An ode which Phœbus gave her to be tried,
And leapt in chorus, with her steadfast front,
While prophet Love, the stars have called a brother
Burnt in his crown, and twined in one another
His love-flower with the purple roses given
In type of that new crown assigned in heaven.

FROM HESIOD.

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE.

(Theog. 947.)

The golden-hairëd Bacchus did espousē
That fairest Ariadne, Minos' daughter,
And made her wifehood blossom in the house;
Where such protective gifts Kronion brought her,
Nor Death nor Age could find her when they sought her.

FROM EURIPIDES.

AURORA AND TITHONUS.

(Troades, Antistrophe, 853.)

Love, Love, who once didst pass the Dardan portals,
Because of Heavenly passion!
Who once didst lift up Troy in exultation,
To mingle in thy bond the high Immortals!—
Love, turned from his own name
To Zeus's shame,
Can help no more at all.
And Eos' self, the fair, white-steeded Morning,—
Her light which blesses other lands, returning,
Has changed to a gloomy pall!
She looked across the land with eyes of amber,—
She saw the city's fall,—
She who, in pure embraces,
Had held there, in the hymeneal chamber,
Her children's father, bright Tithonus old,

Whom the four steeds with starry brows and paces
Bore on, snatched upward, on the car of gold,
And with him, all the land's full hope of joy!
The love-charms of the gods are vain for Troy.

NOTE.—Rendered after Mr. Burges' reading, in some respects —not quite all.

FROM HOMER.

—✦—

HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE.

(Iliad, Lib. VI.)

She rushed to meet him: the nurse following
Bore on her bosom the unsaddened child,
A simple babe, prince Hector's well-loved son,
Like a star shining when the world is dark.
Scamandrius, Hector called him; but the rest
Named him Astyanax, the city's prince,
Because that Hector only, had saved Troy.
He, when he saw his son, smiled silently;
While, dropping tears, Andromache pressed on,
And clung to his hand, and spake, and named his name.

"Hector, my best one,—thine own nobleness
Must needs undo thee. Pity hast thou none
For this young child, and this most sad myself,
Who soon shall be thy widow—since that soon

The Greeks will slay thee in the general rush—
And then, for me, what refuge, 'reft of *thee,*
But to go graveward? Then, no comfort more
Shall touch me, as in the old sad times thou know'st—
Grief only—grief! I have no father now,
No mother mild! Achilles the divine,
He slew my father, sacked his lofty Thebes,
Cilicia's populous city, and slew its king,
Eëtion—father!—did not spoil the corse,
Because the Greek revered him in his soul,
But burnt the body with its dædal arms,
And poured the dust out gently. Round that tomb
The Oreads, daughters of the goat-nursed Zeus,
Tripped in a ring, and planted their green elms.
There were seven brothers with me in the house,
Who all went down to Hades in one day,—
For *he* slew all, Achilles the divine,
Famed for his swift feet,—slain among their herds
Of cloven-footed bulls and flocking sheep!
My mother too, who queened it o'er the woods
Of Hippoplacia, he, with other spoil,
Seized,—and, for golden ransom, freed too late,—
Since, as she went home, arrowy Artemis
Met her and slew her *at my father's door.*
But—oh my *Hector,—thou art still to me*
Father and mother!—*yes, and brother dear,*
O thou, who art my sweetest spouse beside!
Come now, and take me into pity! Stay
I' the town here with us! Do not make thy child

An orphan, nor a widow, thy poor wife!
Call up the people to the fig-tree, where
The city is most accessible, the wall
Most easy of assault!—for thrice thereby
The boldest Greeks have mounted to the breach,—
Both Ajaxes, the famed Idomeneus,
Two sons of Atreus, and the noble one
Of Tydeus,—whether taught by some wise seer,
Or by their own souls prompted and inspired."

Great Hector answered:—"Lady, for these things
It is my part to care. And *I* fear most
My Trojans, and their daughters, and their wives,
Who through their long veils would glance scorn at me
If, coward-like, I shunned the open war.
Nor doth my own soul prompt me to that end!
I learnt to be a brave man constantly,
And to fight foremost where my Trojans fight,
And vindicate my father's glory and mine—
Because I know, by instinct and my soul,
The day comes that our sacred Troy must fall,
And Priam and his people. Knowing which,
I have no such grief for all my Trojans' sake,
For Hecuba's, for Priam's, our old king,
Not for my brothers', who so many and brave
Shall bite the dust before our enemies,—
As, sweet, for *thee!*—to think some mailëd Greek
Shall lead thee weeping and deprive thy life
Of the free sun-sight—that, when gone away

To Argos, thou shalt throw the distaff there,
Not for thy uses—or shalt carry instead
Upon thy loathing brow, as heavy as doom,
The water of Greek wells—Messeis' own,
Or Hyperea's!—that some stander-by,
Marking my tears fall, shall say, 'This is She,
The wife of that same Hector who fought best
Of all the Trojans, when all fought for Troy—'
Ay!—and, so speaking, shall renew thy pang
That, 'reft of Him so named, thou shouldst survive
To a slave's life! But earth shall hide my corse
Ere that shriek sound, wherewith thou art dragged
from Troy."

Thus Hector spake, and stretched his arms to his
child.
Against the nurse's breast, with childly cry,
The boy clung back, and shunned his father's face,
And feared the glittering brass and waving hair
Of the high helmet, nodding horror down.
The father smiled, the mother could not choose
But smile too. Then he lifted from his brow
The helm, and set it on the ground to shine:
Then, kissed his dear child—raised him with both
arms,
And thus invoked Zeus and the general gods:—

"Zeus, and all godships! grant this boy of mine
To be the Trojans' help, as I myself,—

To live a brave life and rule well in Troy!
Till men shall say, 'The son exceeds the sire
By a far glory.' Let him bring home spoil
Heroic, and make glad his mother's heart."

With which prayer, to his wife's extended arms
He gave the child; and she received him straight
To her bosom's fragrance—smiling up her tears.
Hector gazed on her till his soul was moved;
Then softly touched her with his hand and spake.
"My best one—'ware of passion and excess
In any fear. There 's no man in the world
Can send me to the grave apart from fate,—
And no man . . Sweet, I tell thee . . can fly fate—
No good nor bad man. Doom is self-fulfilled.
But now, go home, and ply thy woman's task
Of wheel and distaff! bid thy maidens haste
Their occupation. War 's a care for men—
For all men born in Troy, and chief for me."

Thus spake the noble Hector, and resumed
His crested helmet, while his spouse went home;
But as she went, still looked back lovingly,
Dropping the tears from her reverted face.

THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS.

(Odyss., Lib. XX.)

And so these daughters fair of Pandarus,
The whirlwinds took. The gods had slain their kin:
They were left orphans in their father's house.
And Aphroditè came to comfort them
With incense, luscious honey, and fragrant wine;
And Herè gave them beauty of face and soul
Beyond all women; purest Artemis
Endowed them with her stature and white grace;
And Pallas taught their hands to flash along
Her famous looms. Then, bright with deity,
Toward far Olympus, Aphroditè went
To ask of Zeus (who has his thunder-joys
And his full knowledge of man's mingled fate)
How best to crown those other gifts with love
And worthy marriage: but, what time she went,
The ravishing Harpies snatched the maids away,
And gave them up, for all their loving eyes,
To serve the Furies who hate constantly.

ANOTHER VERSION.

So the storms bore the daughters of Pandarus out
into thrall—

The gods slew their parents; the orphans were left in the hall.
And there, came, to feed their young lives, Aphroditè divine,
With the incense, the sweet-tasting honey, the sweet-smelling wine;
Herè brought them her wit above woman's, and beauty of face;
And pure Artemis gave them her stature, that form might have grace:
And Athenè instructed their hands in her works of renown;
Then, afar to Olympus, divine Aphroditè moved on:
To complete other gifts, by uniting each girl to a mate,
She sought Zeus, who has joy in the thunder and knowledge of fate,
Whether mortals have good chance or ill. But the Harpies alate
In the storm came, and swept off the maidens, and gave them to wait,
With that love in their eyes, on the Furies who constantly hate.

FROM ANACREON.

ODE TO THE SWALLOW.

Thou indeed, little Swallow,
A sweet yearly comer,
Art building a hollow
New nest every summer,
And straight dost depart
Where no gazing can follow,
Past Memphis, down Nile!
Ah! but Love all the while
Builds his nest in my heart,
Through the cold winter-weeks:
And as one Love takes flight,
Comes another, O Swallow,
In an egg warm and white,
And another is callow.
And the large gaping beaks
Chirp all day and all night:

And the Loves who are older
Help the young and the poor Loves,
And the young Loves grown bolder
Increase by the score Loves—
Why, what can be done?
If a noise comes from one
Can I bear all this rout of a hundred and more Loves?

FROM HEINE.

[THE LAST TRANSLATION.]

ROME, 1860.

I.

I.

OUT of my own great woe
I make my little songs,
Which rustle their feathers in throngs
And beat on her heart even so.

II.

They found the way, for their part,
Yet come again, and complain,
Complain, and are not fain
To say what they saw in her heart.

II.

I.

Art thou indeed so adverse?
Art thou so changed indeed?
Against the woman who wrongs me
I cry to the world in my need.

II.

O recreant lips unthankful,
How could ye speak evil, say,
Of the man who so well has kissed you
On many a fortunate day?

III.

I.

My child, we were two children,
Small, merry by childhood's law;
We used to crawl to the hen-house
And hide ourselves in the straw.

II.

We crowed like cocks, and whenever
The passers near us drew—
Cock-a-doodle! they thought
'Twas a real cock that crew.

III.

The boxes about our courtyard
We carpeted to our mind,
And lived there both together—
Kept house in a noble kind.

IV.

The neighbour's old cat often
Came to pay us a visit;
We made her a bow and curtsey,
Each with a compliment in it.

V.

After her health we asked,
Our care and regard to evince—
(We have made the very same speeches
To many an old cat since).

VI.

We also sate and wisely
Discoursed, as old folks do,
Complaining how all went better
In those good times we knew,—

VII.

How love and truth and believing
Had left the world to itself,
And how so dear was the coffee,
And how so rare was the pelf.

VIII.

The children's games are over,
The rest is over with youth—
The world, the good games, the good times,
The belief, and the love, and the truth.

IV.

I.

Thou lovest me not, thou lovest me not!
'Tis scarcely worth a sigh:
Let me look in thy face, and no king in his place
Is a gladder man than I.

II.

Thou hatest me well, thou hatest me well—
Thy little red mouth has told:
Let it reach me a kiss, and, however it is,
My child, I am well consoled.

V.

I.

My own sweet Love, if thou in the grave,
The darksome grave, wilt be,
Then will I go down by the side, and crave
Love-room for thee and me.

II.

I kiss and caress and press thee wild,
Thou still, thou cold, thou white!
I wail, I tremble, and weeping mild,
Turn to a corpse at the right.

III.

The Dead stand up, the midnight calls,
They dance in airy swarms—
We two keep still where the grave-shade falls,
And I lie on in thine arms.

IV.

The Dead stand up, the Judgment-day
Bids such to weal or woe—
But nought shall trouble us where we stay
Embraced and embracing below.

VI.

I.

THE years they come and go;
The races drop in the grave,
Yet never the love doth so,
Which here in my heart I have.

II.

Could I see thee but once, one day,
And sink down so on my knee,
And die in thy sight while I say,
'Lady, I love but thee!'

THE GREEK CHRISTIAN POETS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

—✦—

THE following pieces, first printed in 1842 by the 'Athenæum,' are now reprinted with the liberal permission of that Journal.

It was intended by its Writer, that the account of the Greek Christian Poets should receive corrections, or certainly additions: a project which new objects of interest came to delay. The glancing series of notes upon the English Poets seems suggested by, as well as consequent upon, the account; unless it arose from the publication of Wordsworth's 'Poems of early and late years, including The Borderers,'—in the form of a review of which, the latter part of the paper originally appeared: the former was occasioned by 'The Book of the Poets,' a compilation of the day.

Both performances, laid away long ago, and only lately unfolded for the first time, were perhaps almost forgotten by their Author; but on the whole, in all likelihood, some way or other reproduction was desired: and this is effected accordingly.

A name, which occurs unworthily enough toward the close, should be withdrawn were it found possible: its presence may be pardoned as serving at least to mark more dates than one.

London, February, 1863.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE GREEK CHRISTIAN POETS.

THE Greek language was a strong intellectual life, stronger than any similar one which has lived in the breath of "articulately speaking men," and survived it. No other language has lived so long and died so hard,—pang by pang, each with a dolphin colour—yielding reluctantly to that doom of death and silence which must come at last to the speaker and the speech. Wonderful it is to look back fathoms down the great Past, thousands of years away—where whole generations lie unmade to dust—where the sounding of their trumpets, and the rushing of their scythed chariots, and that great shout which brought down the birds stone dead from beside the sun, are more silent than the dog breathing at our feet, or the fly's paces on our window-pane; and yet, from the heart of which silence, to feel *words* rise up like a smoke—words of men, even words of women, uttered

at first, perhaps, in "excellent low voices," but audible and distinct to our times, through "the dreadful pother" of life and death, the hissing of the steam-engine and the cracking of the cerement! It is wonderful to look back and listen. Blind Homer spoke this Greek after blind Demodocus, with a quenchless light about his brows, which he felt through his blindness. Pindar rolled his chariots in it, prolonging the clamour of the games. Sappho's heart beat through it, and heaved up the world's. Æschylus strained it to the stature of his high thoughts. Plato crowned it with his divine peradventures. Aristophanes made it drunk with the wine of his fantastic merriment. The latter Platonists wove their souls away in it, out of sight of other souls. The first Christians heard in it God's new revelation, and confessed their Christ in it from the suppliant's knee, and presently from the bishop's throne. To all times, and their transitions, the language lent itself. Through the long summer of above two thousand years, from the grasshopper Homer sang of, to that grasshopper of Manuel Phile, which might indeed have been "a burden," we can in nowise mistake the chirping of the bloodless, deathless, wondrous, creature. It chirps on in Greek still. At the close of that long summer, though Greece lay withered to her root, her academic groves and philosophic gardens all leafless and bare, still from the depth of the desolation rose up the voice—

> O cuckoo, shall I call thee bird,
> Or but a wandering voice?

which did not grow hoarse, like other cuckoos, but sang not unsweetly, if more faintly than before. Strangely vital was this Greek language—

> Some straggling spirits were behind, to be
> Laid out with most thrift on its memory.

It seemed as if nature could not part with so lovely a tune, as if she felt it ringing on still in her head—or as if she hummed it to herself, as the watchman used to do, with "night wandering round" him, when he watched wearily on the palace roof of the doomed house of Atreus.

But, although it is impossible to touch with a thought the last estate of Greek poetical literature without the wonder occurring of its being still Greek, still poetry,—though we are startled by the phenomenon of life-like sounds coming up from the ashes of a mighty people—at the aspect of an Alcestis returned from the dead, *veiled* but identical,—we are forced to admit, after the first pause of admiration, that a change has passed upon the great thing we recognize, a change proportionate to the greatness, and involving a caducity. Therefore, in adventuring some imperfect account of the Greek ecclesiastical poets, it is right to premise it with the full and frank admission, that they are not accomplished poets,—that they do not, in fact, reach with their highest

lifted hand, the lowest foot of those whom the world has honoured as Greek poets, but who have honoured the world more by their poetry. The instrument of the Greek tongue was, at the Christian era, an antique instrument, somewhat worn, somewhat stiff in the playing, somewhat deficient in notes which it had once, somewhat feeble and uncertain in such as it retained. The subtlety of the ancient music, the variety of its cadences, the intersections of sweetness in the rise and fall of melodies, rounded and contained in the unity of its harmony, are as utterly lost to this later period as the digamma was to an earlier one. We must not seek for them; we shall not find them; their place knows them no more. Not only was there a lack in the instrument,—there was also a deficiency in the players. Thrown aside, after the old flute-story, by a goddess, it was taken up by a mortal hand—by the hand of men gifted and noble in their generation, but belonging to it intellectually, even by their gifts and their nobleness. Another immortal, a true genius, might, nay, would, have asserted himself, and wrung a poem of almost the ancient force from the infirm instrument. It is easy to fancy, and to wish that it had been so—that some martyr or bishop, when bishops were martyrs, and the earth was still warm with the Sacrificial blood, had been called to the utterance of his soul's devotion, with the emphasis of a great poet's power. No one, however, was so called. Of all the names which

shall presently be reckoned, and of which it is the object of this sketch to give some account, beseeching its readers to hold several in honourable remembrance, not one can be crowned with a steady hand as a true complete poet's name. Such a crown is a sacred dignity, and, as it should not be touched idly, it must not be used here. A born Warwick could find, here, no head for a crown.

Yet we shall reckon names "for remembrance," and speak of things not ignoble—of meek heroic Christians, and heavenward faces washed serene by tears—strong knees bending humbly for the very strength's sake—bright intellects burning often to the winds in fantastic shapes, but oftener still with an honest inward heat, vehement on heart and brain —most eloquent fallible lips that convince us less than they persuade—a divine loquacity of human falsities—poetical souls, that are not souls of poets! Surely not ignoble things! And the reader will perceive at once that the writer's heart is not laid beneath the wheels of a cumbrous ecclesiastical antiquity—that its intent is to love what is loveable, to honour what is honourable, and to kiss both through the dust of centuries, but by no means to recognize a *hierarchy*, whether in the church or in literature.

If, indeed, an opinion on the former relation might be regarded here, it would be well to suggest, that to these "Fathers," as we call them filially, with heads turned away, we owe more reverence for the greyness

of their beards than theological gratitude for the outstretching of their hands. Devoted and disinterested as many among them were, they, themselves, were at most times evidently and consciously surer of their *love*, in a theologic sense, than of their knowledge in any. It is no place for a reference to religious controversy; and if it were, we are about to consider them simply as poets, without trenching on the very wide ground of their prose works and ecclesiastical opinions. Still one passing remark may be admissible, since the fact *is* so remarkable—how any body of Christian men can profess to derive their opinions from "the opinions of the Fathers," when *all* bodies might do so equally. These fatherly opinions are, in truth, multiform, and multitudinous as the fatherly "sublime grey hairs." There is not only a father apiece for every child, but, not to speak it unfilially, a piece of every father for every child. Justin Martyr would, of himself, set up a wilderness of sects, besides "something over" for the future ramifications of each several one. What then should be done with our "Fathers"? Leave them to perish by the time-Ganges, as old men innocent and decrepit, and worthy of no use or honour? Surely not. We may learn of them, if God will let us, *love*, and love is much—we may learn devotedness of them and warm our hearts by theirs; and this, although we rather distrust them as commentators, and utterly refuse them the reverence of our souls, in the capacity of theological oracles

Their place in literature, which we have to do with to-day, may be found, perhaps, by a like moderation. That place is not, it has been admitted, of the highest; and that it is not of the lowest the proof will presently be attempted. There is a mid-air kingdom of the birds called Nephelococcygia, of which Aristophanes tells us something; and we might stand there a moment so as to measure the local adaptitude, putting up the Promethean umbrella to hide us from the "Gods," if it were not for the "men and columns" lower down. But as it is, the very suggestion, if persisted in, would sink all the ecclesiastical antiquity it is desirable to find favour for, to all eternity, in the estimation of the kindest reader. No! the mid-air kingdom of the birds will not serve the wished-for purpose even illustratively, and by grace of the nightingale. "May the sweet saints pardon us" for wronging them by an approach to such a sense, which, if attained and determined, would have consigned them so certainly to what St. Augustine called—when *he* was moderate too—"*mitissima damnatio*," a very mild species of damnation.

It would be, in fact, a rank injustice to the beauty we are here to recognise, to place these writers in the rank of mediocrities, supposing the harsh sense. They may be called mediocrities as poets among poets, but not so as no poets at all. Some of them may sing before gods and men, and in front of any column, from Trajan's to that projected one in Trafalgar Square, to

which is promised the miraculous distinction of making the National Gallery sink lower than we see it now. They may, as a body, sing exultingly, holding the relation of column to gallery, in front of the whole "corpus" of Latin ecclesiastical poetry, and claim the world's ear and the poet's palm. That the modern Latin poets have been more read by scholars, and are better known by reputation to the general reader, is unhappily true: but the truth involves no good reason why it should be so, nor much marvel that it is so. Besides the greater accessibility of Latin literature, the vicissitude of life is extended to posthumous fame, and Time, who is Justice to the poet, is sometimes too busy in pulverizing bones to give the due weight to memories. The modern Latin poets, "elegant,"—which is the critic's word to spend upon them,—elegant as they are occasionally, polished and accurate as they are comparatively, stand cold and lifeless, with statue-eyes, near these good, fervid, faulty Greeks of ours—and we do not care to look again. Our Greeks do, in their degree, claim their ancestral advantage, not the mere advantage of language,—nay, least the advantage of language—a comparative elegance and accuracy of expression being ceded to the Latins—but that higher distinction inherent in brain and breast, of vivid thought and quick sensibility. What if we swamp for a moment the Tertullians and Prudentiuses, and touch, by a permitted anachronism, with one hand, VIDA, with the other, GREGORY

NAZIANZEN, what then? What though the Italian poet be smooth as the Italian Canova—working like him out of stone—smooth and cold, disdaining to ruffle his dactyls with the beating of his pulses—what then? Would we change for him our sensitive Gregory, with all his defects in the glorious "scientia metrica"? We would not—perhaps we should not, even if those defects were not attributable, as Mr. Boyd, in the preface to his work on the Fathers, most justly intimates, to the changes incident to a declining language.

It is, too, as religious poets, that we are called upon to estimate these neglected Greeks—as religious poets, of whom the universal church and the world's literature would gladly embrace more names than can be counted to either. For it is strange that, although Wilhelm Meister's uplooking and downlooking aspects, the reverence to things above and things below, the religious all-clasping spirit, be, and must be, in degree and measure, the grand necessity of every true poet's soul,—of religious poets, strictly so called, the earth is very bare. Religious "parcel-poets" we have, indeed, more than enough; writers of hymns, translators of scripture into prose, or of prose generally into rhymes, of whose heart-devotion a higher faculty were worthy. Also there have been poets, not a few, singing as if earth were still Eden; and poets, many, singing as if in the first hour of exile, when the echo of the curse was louder than the whisper of the promise. But the right "genius of Chris-

tianism" has done little up to this moment, even for Chateaubriand. We want the touch of Christ's hand upon our literature, as it touched other dead things —we want the sense of the saturation of Christ's blood upon the souls of our poets, that it may cry *through* them in answer to the ceaseless wail of the Sphinx of our humanity, expounding agony into renovation. Something of this has been perceived in art when its glory was at the fullest. Something of a yearning after this may be seen among the Greek Christian poets, something which would have been *much* with a stronger faculty. It will not harm us in any case, as lovers of literature and honest judges, if we breathe away, or peradventure *besom* away, the thick dust which lies upon their heavy folios, and besom away, or peradventure *breathe* away, the inward intellectual dust, which must be confessed to lie thickly, too, upon the heavy poems, and make our way softly and meekly into the heart of such hidden beauties (hidden and scattered) as our good luck, or good patience, or, to speak more reverently, the intrinsic goodness of the Fathers of Christian Poetry, shall permit us to discover. May gentle readers favour the endeavour, with "gentle airs," if any! readers not too proud to sleep, were it only for Homer's sake; nor too passionate, at their worst displeasure, to do worse than growl in their sleeves, after the manner of "most delicate monsters." It is, not intended to crush this forbearing class with folios

nor even with a folio; only to set down briefly in their sight what shall appear to the writer the characteristics of each poet, and to illustrate the opinion by the translation of a few detached passages, or, in certain possible cases, of short entire poems. And so much has been premised, simply that too much be not expected.

It has the look of an incongruity, to begin an account of the Greek Christian poets with a Jew; and EZEKIEL is a Jew in his very name, and a "poet of the Jews" by profession. Moreover he is wrapt in such a mystery of chronology, that nobody can be quite sure of his not having lived before the Christian era—and one whole whisper establishes him as an unit of the famous seventy or seventy-two, under Ptolemy Philadelphus. Let us waive the chronology in favour of the mystery. He is brought out into light by Clemens Alexandrinus; and being associated with Greek poets, and a writer himself of Greek verses, we may receive him in virtue of the τοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτιγξ, with little fear, in his case, of implying an injustice in that middle bird-locality of Nephelococcygia. The reader must beware of confounding him with the prophet; and the circumstance of the latter's inspiration is sufficiently distinguishing. Our Greek Ezekiel is, indeed, whatever his chronology may be, no *vates* in the ancient sense. A Greek tragedy, (and some fragments of a tragedy are all that we hold of him,) by a Jew, and on a Jewish

subject, 'The Exodus from Egypt,' may startle the most serene of us into curiosity—with which curiosity begins and ends the only strong feeling we can bring to bear upon the work; since, if the execution of it is somewhat curious too, there is a gentle collateral dulness which effectually secures us from feverish excitement. Moses prologizes after the worst manner of Euripides (worse than the worse), compendiously relating his adventures among the bulrushes and in Pharaoh's household, concluded by his slaying an Egyptian, *because nobody was looking*. So saith the poet. Then follows an interview between the Israelite and Zipporah, and her companions, wherein he puts to her certain geographical questions, and she (as far as we can make out through fragmentary cracks) rather *brusquely* proposes their mutual marriage; on which subject he does not venture an opinion; but we find him next confiding his dreams in a family fashion to her father, who considers them satisfactory. Here occurs a broad crack down the tragedy—and we are suddenly called to the revelation from the bush by an extraordinarily ordinary dialogue, detween Deity and Moses. It is a surprising specimen of the kind of composition adverted to some lines ago, as the translation of Scripture into prose; and the sublime simplicity of the scriptural narrative being thus done (away) into Greek for a certain time, the following reciprocation,—to which our old moralities can scarcely do more, or less, than

furnish a parallel—prays for an English—exposure. The Divine Being is supposed to address Moses:—

But what is this thou holdest in thine hand?—
Let thy reply be sudden.
Moses. 'Tis my rod—
I chasten with it quadrupeds and men.
Voice from the Bush. Cast it upon the ground—and straight recoil;
For it shall be, to move thy wonderment,
A terrible serpent.
Moses. It is cast. But THOU,
Be gracious to me, Lord. How terrible!
How monstrous! Oh, be pitiful to me!
I shudder to behold it, my limbs shake.

The reader is already consoled for the destiny which mutilated the tragedy, without requiring the last words of the analysis. Happily characteristic of the "meekest of men" is Moses's naïve admission of the uses of his rod—to beat men and animals withal—of course "when nobody is looking."

CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, to whom we owe whatever gratitude is due for our fragmentary Ezekiel, was originally an Athenian philosopher, afterwards a converted Christian, a Presbyter of the Church at Alexandria, and preceptor of the famous Origen. Clemens flourished at the close of the second century. As a prose writer—and we have no prose writings of his, except such as were produced subsequently to his conversion—he is learned and various. His 'Pedagogue' is a wanderer, to universal intents and

purposes; and his 'Tapestry,' if the 'Stromata' may be called so, is embroidered in all cross-stitches of philosophy, with not much scruple as to the shading of colours. In the midst of all is something, ycleped a dithyrambic ode, addressed to the Saviour, composite of fantastic epithets in the mode of the old litanies, and almost as bald of merit as the Jew-Greek drama, though Clemens himself (worthier in worthier places) be the poet. Here is the opening, which is less fanciful than what follows it:—

Curb for wild horses,
Wing for bird-courses
Never yet flown!
Helm, safe for weak ones,
Shepherd, bespeak once,
The young lambs thine own.
Rouse up the youth,
Shepherd and feeder,
So let them bless thee,
Praise and confess thee,—
Pure words on pure mouth,—
Christ, the child-leader!
O, the saints' Lord,
All-dominant word!
Holding, by Christdom,
God's highest wisdom!
Column in place
When sorrows seize us,—
Endless in grace
Unto man's race,
Saving one, Jesus!
Pastor and ploughman,

Helm, curb, together,—
Pinion that now can
(Heavenly of feather)
Raise and release us
Fisher who catcheth
Those whom he watcheth . . .

It goes on; but we need not do so. "By the pricking of our thumbs," we know that the reader has had enough of it.

Passing rapidly into the fourth century, we would offer our earliest homage to Gregory Nazianzen,

"That name must ever be to us a friend,"

when the two APOLINARII cross our path and intercept the "all hail." Apolinarius the grammarian, formerly of Alexandria, held the office of presbyter in the church of Laodicæa, and his son Apolinarius, an accomplished rhetorician, that of *reader*, an ancient ecclesiastical office, in the same church. This younger Apolinarius was a man of indomitable energies and most practical inferences; and when the edict of Julian forbade to the Christians the study of Grecian letters, he, assisted perhaps by his father's hope and hand, stood strong in the gap, not in the attitude of supplication, not with the gesture of consolation, but in power and sufficiency to fill up the void and baffle the tyrant. Both father and son were in the work, by some testimony; the younger Apolinarius standing out, by all, as the chief worker, and only one in any extensive sense. "Does Julian deny us Homer?"

said the brave man in his armed soul—"I am Homer!" and straightway he turned the whole Biblical history, down to Saul's accession, into Homeric hexameters, —dividing the work, so as to clench the identity of first and second Homers, into twenty-four books, each superscribed by a letter of the alphabet, and the whole acceptable, according to the expression of Sozomen, αντι της Ὁμηρου ποιησεως, in the place of Homer's poetry. "Does Julian deny us Euripides?" said Apolinarius again—"I am Euripides!" and up he sprang,—as good an Euripides (who can doubt it?) as he ever was a Homer. "Does Julian forbid us Menander?—Pindar?—Plato?—I am Menander! —I am Pindar!—I am Plato!" And comedies, lyrics, philosophics, flowed fast at the word; and the gospels and epistles adapted themselves naturally to the rules of Socratic disputation. A brave man, forsooth, was our Apolinarius of Laodicæa, and literally a man of men—for, observe, says Sozomen, with a venerable innocence, at which the gravest may smile gravely,—as at a doublet worn awry at the Council of Nice,—that the old authors did each man his own work, whereas this Apolinarius did every man's work in addition to his own—and so admirably —intimates the ecclesiastical critic,—that if it were not for the common prejudice in favour of antiquity, no ancient could be missed in the all-comprehensive representativeness of the Laodicæan writer. So excellent was his ability, to "outbrave the stars in

several kinds of light," besides the Cæsar! Whether Julian, naturally mortified to witness this germination of illustrious heads under the very iron of his searing, vowed vengeance against the Hydra-spirit, by the sacred memory of the animation of his own beard, we do not exactly know. To embitter the wrong, Apolinarius sent him a treatise upon truth—a confutation of the pagan doctrine, apart from the scriptural argument,—the Emperor's notice of which is both worthy of his Cæsarship, and a good model-notice for all sorts of critical dignities. Ανεγνων εγνων κατεγνων, is the Greek of it; so that, turning from the letter to catch something of the point, we may write it down—"I have perused, I have mused, I have abused": which provoked as imperious a retort —"Thou mayest have perused, but thou hast not mused; for hadst thou mused, thou wouldst not have abused." Brave Laodicæan!

Apolinarius's laudable *double* of Greek literature has perished, the reader will be concerned to hear, from the face of the earth, being, like other *lusus*, or marvels, or monsters, brief of days. One only tragedy remains, with which the memory of Gregory Nazianzen has been right tragically affronted, and which Gregory,—ει τις αισθησις, as he said of Constantine,—would cast off with the scorn and anger befitting an Apolinarian heresy. For Apolinarius, besides being an epoist, dramatist, lyrist, philosopher, and rhetorician, was, we are sorry to add, in the

eternal bustle of his soul, a heretic,—possibly for the advantage of something additional to do. He not only intruded into the churches hymns which were not authorized, being his own composition—so that reverend brows grew dark to hear women with musical voices sing them softly to the turning of their distaff,—but he fell into the heresy of denying a human soul to the perfect MAN, and of leaving the Divinity in bare combination with the Adamic dust. No wonder that a head so beset with many thoughts and individualities should at last turn round!—that eyes rolling in fifty fine frenzies of twenty-five fine poets should at last turn blind!—that a determination to rival all geniuses should be followed by a disposition more baleful in its exercise, to understand "all mysteries"! Nothing can be plainer than the step after step, whereby, through excess of vain-glory and morbid mental activity, Apolinarius, the vice-poet of Greece, subsided into Apolinarius the chief heretic of Christendom.

To go back sighingly to the tragedy, where we shall have to sigh again—the only tragedy left to us of all the tragic works of Apolinarius (but we do not sigh for *that!*)—let no voice evermore attribute it to Gregory Nazianzen. How could Mr. Alford do so, however hesitatingly, in his "Chapters," attaching to it, without the hesitation, a charge upon the writer, whether Gregory or another man, that *he*, whoever he was, had of his own free will and choice, destroyed

the old Greek originals out of which his tragedy was constructed, and left it a monument of their sacrifice as of the blood on his barbarian hand? The charge passes, not only before a breath, but before its own breath. The tragedy is, in fact, a specimen of *centoism*, which is the adaptation of the phraseology of one work to the construction of another; and we have only to glance at it to perceive the Medæa of Euripides, dislocated into the CHRISTUS PATIENS. Instead of the ancient opening—

> Oh, would ship Argo had not sailed away
> To Colchos by the rough Symplegades!
> Nor ever had been felled in Pelion's grove
> The pine, hewn for her side! . . . .
> So she my queen
> Medæa, had not touched this fatal shore,
> Soul-struck by love of Jason!

Apolinarius opens it thus—

> Oh, would the serpent had not glode along
> To Eden's garden-land,—nor ever had
> The crafty dragon planted in that grove
> A slimy snare! So she, rib-born of man,
> The wretched misled mother of our race,
> Had dared not to dare on beyond worst daring,
> Soul-struck by love of—apples!

"Let us alone for keeping our countenance"—and at any rate we are bound to ask gravely of Mr. Alford, *is the Medæa destroyed?*—and if not, did the author of the 'Christus patiens' destroy his originals? and if not, may we not say of Mr. Alford's

charge against that author, "Oh, would he had not made it!" So far from Apolinarius being guilty of destroying his originals, it was his reverence for them which struggled with the edict of the persecutor, and accomplished this dramatic adventure;—and this adventure, the only remaining specimen of his adventurousness, may help us to the secret of his wonderful fertility and omnirepresentativeness, which is probably this—that the great majority of his works, tragic, comic, lyric, and philosophic, consisted simply of *centos*. Yet we pray for justice to Apolinarius: we pray for honour to his motives and energies. Without pausing to inquire whether it had been better and wiser to let poetry and literature depart at once before the tyranny of the edict, than to drag them back by the hair into attitudes grotesquely ridiculous—better and wiser for the Greek Christian schools to let them forgo altogether the poems of their Euripides, than adapt to the meek sorrows of the tender Virgin-mother, the bold, bad, cruel frenzy of Medæa, in such verses as these—

> She howls out ancient oaths, invokes the faith
> Of pledged right-hands, and calls for witness, God!

—we pray straightforwardly for justice and honour to the motives and energies of Apolinarius. "Oh, would that" many lived *now* as appreciative of the influences of poetry on our schools and country, as impatient of their contraction, as self-devoted in the great work

of extending them! There remains of his poetical labours, besides the tragedy, a translation of David's Psalms into "heroic verse," which the writer of these remarks has not seen,—and of which those critics, who desire to deal gently with Apolinarius, seem to begin their indulgence by doubting the authenticity.

It is pleasant to turn shortly round, and find ourselves face to face, not with the author of 'Christus Patiens,' but with one antagonistical both to his poetry and his heresy, GREGORY NAZIANZEN. A noble and tender man was this Gregory, and so tender, because so noble; a man to lose no cubit of his stature for being looked at steadfastly, or struck at reproachfully. "You may cast me down," he said, "from my bishop's throne, but you cannot banish me from before God's." And bishop as he was, his saintly crown stood higher than his tiara, and his loving martyr-smile, the crown of a nature more benign than his fortune, shone up toward both. Son of the bishop of Nazianzen, and holder of the diocese which was his birthplace, previous to his elevation to the level of the storm in the bishopric of Constantinople, little did he care for bishoprics or high places of any kind, —the desire of his soul being for solitude, quietude, and that silent religion, which should "rather be than seem." But his father's head bent whitely before him, even in the chamber of his brother's death,—and Basil, his beloved friend, the "half of his soul," pressed on him with the weight of love; and Gregory

feeling their tears upon his cheeks, did not count his own, but took up the priestly office. Poor Gregory! not merely as a priest, but as a man, he had a sighing life of it. His student days at Athens, where he and Basil read together poems and philosophies, and holier things, or talked low and *misopogonistically* of their fellow-student Julian's bearded boding smile, were his happiest days. He says of himself,

> As many stones
> Were thrown at *me*, as other men had flowers.

Nor was persecution the worst evil; for friend after friend, beloved after beloved, passed away from before his face, and the voice which charmed them living, spoke brokenly beside their graves,—his funeral orations marked severally the wounds of his heart,—and his genius served, as genius often does, to lay an emphasis on his grief. The passage we shall venture to translate, is rather a cry than a song—

> Where are my winged words? Dissolved in air.
> Where is my flower of youth? All withered. Where
> My glory? Vanished. Where the strength I knew
> From comely limbs? Disease hath changed it too,
> And bent them. Where the riches and the lands?
> GOD HATH THEM! Yea, and sinners' snatching hands
> Have grudged the rest. Where is my father, mother,
> And where my blessed sister, my sweet brother?
> Gone to the grave!—There did remain for me
> Alone my fatherland, till destiny,
> Malignly stirring a black tempest, drove
> My foot from that last rest. And now I rove

Estranged and desolate a foreign shore,
And drag my mournful life and age all hoar
Throneless and cityless, and childless save
This father-care for children, which I have,
Living from day to day on wandering feet.
Where shall I cast this body? What will greet
My sorrows with an end? What gentle ground
And hospitable grave will wrap me round?
Who last my dying eyelids stoop to close—
Some saint, the Saviour's friend? or one of those
Who do not know him? The air interpose,
And scatter these words too!

The return upon the first thought is highly pathetic; and there is a restlessness of anguish about the whole passage, which consecrates it with the cross of nature. His happy Athenian associations gave a colour, unwashed out by tears, to his mind and works. Half apostolical he was, and half scholastical; and while he mused, on his bishop's throne, upon the mystic tree of twelve fruits, and the shining of the river of life, he carried, as Milton did, with a gentle and not ungraceful distraction, both hands full of green trailing branches from the banks of the Cephissus, nay, from the very plane-tree which Socrates sat under with Phædrus, when they two talked about beauty to the rising and falling of its leaves. As an orator, he was greater, all must feel if some do not think, than his contemporaries; and the "golden mouth" might confess it meekly. Erasmus compares him to Isocrates, but the unlikeness is obvious:

Gregory was not excellent at an artful blowing of the pipes. He spoke grandly, as the wind does, in gusts; and, as in a mighty wind, which combines unequal noises, the creaking of trees and rude swinging of doors as well as the sublime sovereign rush along the valleys, we gather the idea, from his eloquence, less of music than of power. Not that he is cold as the wind is—the metaphor goes no further: Gregory cannot be cold, even by disfavour of his antithetic points. He is various in his oratory, full and rapid in allusion, briefly graphic in metaphor, equally sufficient for indignation or pathos, and gifted peradventure with a keener dagger of sarcasm than should hang in a saint's girdle. His orations against Julian have all these characteristics, but they are not poetry, and we must pass down lower, and quite over his beautiful letters, to Gregory the poet.

He wrote *thirty thousand verses*, among which are several long poems, severally defective in a defect common but not necessary to short occasional poems, and lamentable anywhere, a want of unity and completeness. The excellencies of his prose are transcribed, with whatever faintness, in his poetry—the exaltation, the devotion, the sweetness, the pathos, even to the playing of satirical power about the graver meanings. But although noble thoughts break up the dulness of the groundwork,—although, with the instinct of greater poets, he bares his heart in his poetry, and the heart is worth baring, still

monotony of construction without unity of intention is the most wearisome of monotonies, and, except in the case of a few short poems, we find it everywhere in Gregory. The lack of variety is extended to the cadences, and the pauses fall stiffly "*come corpo morto cade.*" Melodious lines we have often: harmonious passages scarcely ever—the music turning heavily on its own axle, as inadequate to living evolution. The poem on his own life ('De Vitâ suâ') is, in many places, interesting and affecting, yet faulty with all these faults. The poem on celibacy, which state is commended by Gregory as becometh a bishop, has occasionally graphic touches, but is dull enough generally to suit the fairest spinster's view of that melancholy subject. If Hercules could have read it, he must have rested in the middle—from which the reader is entreated to forbear the inference that the poem has not been read through by the writer of the present remarks, seeing that that writer marked the grand concluding moment with a white stone, and laid up the memory of it among the chief triumphs, to say nothing of the fortunate deliverances, *vitæ suæ*. In Gregory's elegaic poems, our ears, at least, are better contented, because the sequence of pentameter to hexameter necessarily excludes the various cadence which they yearn for under other circumstances. His anacreontics are sometimes nobly written, with a certain brave recklessness, as if the thoughts despised the measure—and we select from

this class a specimen of his poetry, both because three of his hymns have already appeared in the 'Athenæum,' and because the anacreontic in question includes to a remarkable extent, the various qualities we have attributed to Gregory, not omitting that play of satirical humour with which he delights to ripple the abundant flow of his thoughts. The writer, though also a translator, feels less misgiving than usual in offering to the reader, in such English as is possible, this spirited and beautiful poem.

SOUL AND BODY.

What wilt thou possess or be?
O my soul, I ask of thee.
What of great, or what of small,
Counted precious therewithal?
Be it only rare, and want it,
I am ready, soul, to grant it.
Wilt thou choose to have and hold
Lydian Gyges' charm of old,
So to rule us with a ring,
Turning round the jewelled thing,
Hidden by its face concealed,
And revealed by it's revealed?
Or preferrest Midas' fate—
He who died in golden state,
All things being changed to gold?
Of a golden hunger dying,
Through a surfeit of "would I"-ing!
Wilt have jewels brightly cold,
Or may fertile acres please?
Or the sheep of many a fold,

Camels, oxen, for the wold?
Nay! I will not give thee these!
These to take thou hast not will,
These to give I have not skill;
Since I cast earth's cares abroad,
That day when I turned to God.

Wouldst a throne, a crown sublime,
Bubble blown upon the time?
So thou mayest sit to-morrow
Looking downward in meek sorrow,
Some one walking by thee scorning,
Who adored thee yester morning,
Some malign one? Wilt be bound
Fast in marriage (joy unsound!)
And be turnèd round and round
As the time turns? Wilt thou catch it,
That sweet sickness? and to match it
Have babies by the hearth, bewildering?
And if I tell thee the best children
Are none—what answer?
Wilt thou thunder
Thy rhetoricks, move the people under?
Covetest to sell the laws
With no justice in thy cause,
And bear on, or else be borne,
Before tribunals worthy scorn?
Wilt thou shake a javelin rather
Breathing war? or wilt thou gather
Garlands from the wrestler's ring?
Or kill beasts for glorying?
Covetest the city's shout,
And to be in brass struck out?
Cravest thou that shade of dreaming,

Passing air of shifting seeming,
Rushing of a printless arrow,
Clapping echo of a hand?
What to those who understand
Are to-day's enjoyments narrow,
Which to-morrow go again,
Which are shared with evil men,
And of which no man in his dying
Taketh aught for softer lying?
What then wouldst thou, if thy mood
Choose not these? what wilt thou be,
O my soul? a deity?
A God before the face of God,
Standing glorious in His glories,
Choral in His angels' chorus?

Go! upon thy wing arise,
Plumèd by quick energies,
Mount in circles up the skies:
And I will bless thy wingèd passion,
Help with words thine exaltation,
And, like a bird of rapid feather,
Outlaunch thee, Soul, upon the æther.

But thou, O fleshly nature, say,
Thou with odours from the clay,
Since thy presence I must have
As a lady with a slave,
What wouldst thou possess or be,
That thy breath may stay with thee?
Nay! I owe thee nought beside,
Though thine hands be open wide.
Would a table suit thy wishes,
Fragrant with sweet oils and dishes

Wrought to subtle niceness? where
Stringèd music strokes the air,
And blithe hand-clappings, and the smooth
Fine postures of the tender youth
And virgins wheeling through the dance
With an unveiled countenance,—
Joys for drinkers, who love shame,
And the maddening wine-cup's flame.
Wilt thou such, howe'er decried?
Take them,—and a rope beside!

Nay! this boon I give instead
Unto friend insatiated,—
May some rocky house receive thee,
Self-roofed, to conceal thee chiefly;
Or if labour there must lurk,
Be it by a short day's work!
And for garment, camel's hair,
As the righteous clothèd were,
Clothe thee! or the bestial skin,
Adam's bareness hid within,—
Or some green thing from the way,
Leaf of herb, or branch of vine,
Swelling, purpling as it may,
Fearless to be drunk for wine!
Spread a table there beneath thee,
Which a sweetness shall up-breathe thee,
And which the dearest earth is giving,
Simple present to all living!
When that we have placed thee near it,
We will feed thee with glad spirit.
Wilt thou eat? soft, take the bread,
Oaten cake, if that bested;
Salt will season all aright,

And thine own good appetite,
Which we measure not, nor fetter:
'Tis an uncooked condiment,
Famine's self the only better.
Wilt thou drink? why, here doth bubble
Water from a cup unspent,
Followed by no tipsy trouble,
Pleasure sacred from the grape!
Wilt thou have it in some shape
More like luxury? we are
No grudgers of wine-vinegar!
But if all will not suffice thee,
And thou covetest to draw
In that pitcher with a flaw,
Brimfull pleasures heaven denies thee—
Go, and seek out, by that sign,
Other help than this of mine!
For me, I have not leisure so
To warm thee, Sweet, my household foe,
Until, like a serpent frozen,
New-maddened with the heat, thou loosen
Thy rescued fang within mine heart!

Wilt have measureless delights
Of gold-roofed palaces, and sights
From pictured or from sculptured art,
With motion near their life; and splendour
Of bas-relief, with tracery tender,
And varied and contrasted hues?
Wilt thou have, as nobles use,
Broidered robes to flow about thee?
Jewelled fingers? Need we doubt thee?
Gauds for which the wise will flout thee?
I most, who, of all beauty, know
It must be inward, to be so!

And thus I speak to mortals low,
Living for the hour, and o'er
Its shadow, seeing nothing more:
But for those of nobler bearing,
Who live more worthily of wearing
A portion of the heavenly nature—
To low estate of clayey creature,
See, I bring the beggar's meed,
Nutriment beyond the need!
O, beholder of the Lord,
Prove on me the flaming sword!
Be mine husbandman, to nourish
Holy plants, that words may flourish
Of which mine enemy would spoil me,
Using pleasurehood to foil me!
Lead me closer to the tree
Of all life's eternity;
Which, as I have pondered, is
The knowledge of God's greatnesses:
Light of One, and shine of Three,
Unto whom all things that be
Flow and tend!
In such a guise,
Whoever on the earth is wise
Wilt speak unto himself: and who
Such inner converse would eschew,—
We say perforce of that poor wight,
"He lived in vain!" and if *aright*,
It is not the worst word we might.

Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium, was beloved and much appreciated by Gregory, and often mentioned in his writings. Few of the works of Amphilochius are extant, and of these only one is a poem.

It is a didactic epistle to Seleucus, 'On the Right Direction of his Studies and Life,' and has been attributed to Gregory Nazianzen by some writers, upon very inadequate evidence,—that adduced (the similar phraseology which conveys, in this poem and a poem of Gregory's, the catalogue of canonical scriptures), being as easily explained by the imitation of one poet, as by the identity of two. They differ, moreover, upon ground more important than phraseology: Amphilochius appearing to reject, or at least to receive doubtfully, Jude's epistle, and the Second of Peter. And there is a harsh force in the whole poem, which does not remind us of our Nazianzen, while it becomes, in the course of dissuading Seleucus from the amusements of the amphitheatre, graphic and effective. We hear, through the description, the grinding of the tigers' teeth, the sympathy of the people with the tigers showing still more savage.

They sit unknowing of these agonies,
Spectators at a show. When a man flies
From a beast's jaw, they groan, as if at least
They missed the ravenous pleasure, like the beast,
And sat there vainly. When, in the next spring,
The victim is attained, and, uttering
The deep roar or quick shriek between the fangs,
Beats on the dust the passion of his pangs,
All pity dieth in that glaring look;
They clap to see the blood run like a brook;
They stare with hungry eyes, which tears should fill,
And cheer the beasts on with their soul's good will;

And wish more victims to their maw, and urge
And lash their fury, as they shared the surge,
Gnashing their teeth, like beasts, on flesh of men.

There is an appalling reality in this picture. The epistle consists of 333 lines, which we mention specifically, because the poet takes advantage of the circumstance to illustrate or enforce an important theological doctrine:—

Three hundred lines, three decads, monads three,
Comprise my poem. *Love the Trinity.*

It would be almost a pain, and quite a regret, to pass from this fourth century, without speaking a word which belongs to it—a word which rises to our lips, a word worthy of honour—HELIODORUS. Though a bishop and an imaginative writer, his 'Æthiopica' has no claim on our attention, either by right of Christianity or poetry; and yet we may be pardoned on our part for love's sake, and on account of the false position into which, by negligence of readers or insufficiency of translators, his beautiful romance has fallen, if we praise it heartily and faithfully even here. Our tears praised it long ago, our recollection does so now, and its own pathetic eloquence and picturesque descriptiveness are ripe for any praise. It has, besides, a vivid Arabian Night charm, almost as charming as Scheherazade herself, suggestive of an Arabian Night story drawn out "in many a winding bout," and not merely on the ground of extempora-

neous loving and methodical (must we say it?) *lying*. In good sooth—no, not in good sooth, but in evil leasing—every hero and heroine of them all, from Abou Hassan to "the divine Chariclæa," does lie most vehemently and abundantly by gift of nature and choice of author, whether bishop or sultana. "It is," as Pepys observes philosophically of the comparative destruction of gin-shops and churches in the Great Fire of London, "pretty to observe" how they all lie. And although the dearest of story-tellers, our own Chaucer, has told us that "some leasing is, of which there cometh none advauntage to no wight," even that species is used by them magnanimously in its turn, for the bare glory's sake, and without caring for the "advauntage." With equal liberality, but more truth, we write down the bishop of Tricca's romance *charming*, and wish the charm of it (however we may be out of place in naming him among poets,) upon any poet who has not yet felt it, and whose eyes, giving honour, may wander over these Remarks. The poor bishop thought as well of his book as we do, perhaps better; for when commanded, under ecclesiastical censure, to burn it or give up his bishopric, he gave up the bishopric. And who blames Heliodorus? He thought well of his romance; he was angry with those who did not; he was weak with the love of it. Let whosoever blames, speak low. Romance-writers are not educated for martyrs, and the exacted martyrdom was very very hard. Think of

that English bishop who burnt his hand by an act of volition—only his hand, and which was sure to be burnt afterwards; and how he was praised for it! Heliodorus had to do with a dearer thing—hand-writing, not hands. Authors will pardon him, if bishops do not.

NONNUS of Panopolis, the poet of the 'Dionysiaca,' a work of some twenty-two thousand verses, on some twenty-two thousand subjects shaken together, flourished, as people say of many a dry-rooted soul, at the commencement of the fifth century. He was converted from paganism, but we are sorry to make the melancholy addition, that he was never converted from the 'Dionysiaca.' The only Christian poem we owe to him—a paraphrase, in hexameters, of the apostle John's gospel—does all that a bald verbosity and an obscure tautology can do or undo, to quench the divinity of that divine narrative. The two well-known words, bearing on their brief vibration the whole passion of a world saved through pain from pain, are thus *traduced*:—

> They answered him,
> "Come and behold." *Then Jesus himself groaned*
> *Dropping strange tears from eyes unused to weep.*

"Unused to weep!" *Was* it so of the man of sorrows? Oh, obtuse poet! We had translated the opening passage of the Paraphrase, and laid it by for transcription, but are repelled. Enough is said. Nonnus was never converted from the Dionysiaca.

SYNESIUS, of Cyrene, learnt Plato's philosophy so well of Hypatia of Alexandria at the commencement of the fifth century, or rather before; that, to the obvious honour of that fair and learned teacher, he never, as bishop of Ptolemais, could attain to unlearning it. He did not wish to be bishop of Ptolemais; he had divers objections to the throne and the domination. He loved his dogs, he loved his wife; he loved Hypatia and Plato as well as he loved truth; and he loved beyond all things, under the womanly instruction of the former, to have his own way. He was a poet, too; the chief poet, we do not hesitate to record our opinion,—the chief, for true and natural gifts, of all our Greek Christian poets; and it was his choice to pray lyrically between the dew and the cloud rather than preach dogmatically between the doxies. If Gregory shrank from the episcopal office through a meek self-distrust and a yearning for solitude, Synesius repulsed the invitation to it through an impatience of control over heart and life, and for the earnest joy's sake of thinking out his own thought in the hunting-grounds, with no deacon or disciple astuter than his dog to watch the thought in his face, and trace it backward or forward, as the case might be, into something more or less than what was orthodox. Therefore he, a man of many and wandering thoughts, refused the bishopric,—not weepingly, indeed, as Gregory did, nor feigning madness with another of the "nolentes episcopari" of that earnest

period,—but with a sturdy enunciation of resolve, more likely to be effectual, of keeping his wife by his side as long as he lived, and of doubting as long as he pleased to doubt upon the resurrection of the body. But Synesius was a man of genius, and of all such true energies as are taken for granted in the name; and the very sullenness of his "nay," being expressive to grave judges of the faithfulness of his "yea and amen," he was considered too noble a man not to be made a bishop of in his own despite, and on his own terms. The fact proves the latitude of discipline, and even of doctrine, permitted to the churches of that age; and it does not appear that the church at Ptolemais suffered any wrong as its result, seeing that Synesius, recovering from the shock militant of his ordination, in the course of which his ecclesiastical friends had "laid hands upon him" in the roughest sense of the word, performed his new duties willingly; was no sporting bishop otherwise than as a "fisher of men"—sent his bow to the dogs, and his dogs to Jericho, that nearest Coventry to Ptolemais, silencing his "staunch hound's authentic voice" as soon as ever any importance became attached to the authenticity of his own. And if, according to the bond, he retained his wife and his Platonisms, we may honour him by the inference, that he did so for conscience' sake still more than love's, since the love was inoperative in other matters. For spiritual fervour and exaltation, he has honour among men and angels; and however

intent upon spiritualizing away the most glorified material body from "the heaven of his invention," he held fast and earnestly, as anybody's clenched hand could an horn of the altar, the Homoousion doctrine of the Christian heaven, and other chief doctrines emphasizing the divine sacrifice. But this poet has a higher place among poets than this bishop among bishops; the highest, we must repeat our conviction, of all yet named or to be named by us as "Greek Christian poets." Little, indeed, of his poetry has reached us, but this little is great in a nobler sense than of quantity; and when of his odes, Anacreontic, for the most part, we cannot say praisefully that "they smell of Anacreon," it is because their fragrance is holier and more abiding; it is because the human soul burning in the censer, effaces from our spiritual perceptions the attar of a thousand rose-trees whose roots are in Teos. These odes have, in fact, a wonderful rapture and ecstasy. And if we find in them the phraseology of Plato or Plotinus, for he leant lovingly to the later Platonists,—nay, if we find in them oblique references to the out-worn mythology of paganism, even so have we beheld the mixed multitude of unconnected motes wheeling, rising in a great sunshine, as the sunshine were a motive energy, —and even so the burning, adoring poet-spirit sweeps upward the motes of world-fancies (as if, being in the world, their tendency was Godward) upward in a strong stream of sunny light, while she rushes into

the presence of "The Alone." We say the *spirit* significantly in speaking of this poet's aspiration. His is an ecstasy of abstract intellect, of pure spirit, cold though impetuous; the heart does not beat in it, nor is the human voice heard; the poet is true to the heresy of the ecclesiastic, and there is no resurrection of the body. We shall attempt a translation of the ninth ode, closer if less graceful and polished than Mr. Boyd's, helping our hand to courage by the persuasion that the genius of its poetry must look through the thickest blanket of our dark.

Well-beloved and glory-laden,
Born of Solyma's pure maiden!
I would hymn Thee, blessed Warden,
Driving from Thy Father's garden
Blinking serpent's crafty lust,
With his bruised head in the dust!
Down Thou camest, low as earth,
Bound to those of mortal birth;
Down Thou camest, low as hell,
Where shepherd-Death did tend and keep
A thousand nations like to sheep,
While weak with age old Hades fell
Shivering through his dark to view Thee,
And the Dog did backward yell
With jaws all gory to let through Thee!
So, redeeming from their pain
Choirs of disembodied ones,
Thou didst lead whom Thou didst gather,
Upward in ascent again,
With a great hymn to the Father,
Upward to the pure white thrones!

King, the dæmon tribes of air
Shuddered back to feel Thee there!
And the holy stars stood breathless,
Trembling in their chorus deathless;
A low laughter fillèd æther—
Harmony's most subtle sire
From the seven strings of his lyre,
Stroked a measured music hither—
Io pæan! victory!
Smiled the star of morning—he
Who smileth to foreshow the day!
Smilèd Hesperus the golden,
Who smileth soft for Venus gay!
While that hornèd glory holden
Brimful from the fount of fire,
The white moon, was leading higher
In a gentle pastoral wise
All the nightly deities!
Yea, and Titan threw abroad
The far shining of his hair
'Neath Thy footsteps holy-fair,
Owning Thee the Son of God;
The Mind artificer of all,
And his own fire's original!

And Thou upon Thy wing of will
Mounting,—Thy God-foot uptill
The neck of the blue firmament,—
Soaring, didst alight content
Where the spirit-spheres were singing,
And the fount of good was springing,
In the silent heaven!
Where Time is not with his tide
Ever running, never weary,
Drawing earth-born things aside

Against the rocks; nor yet are given
The plagues death-bold that ride the dreary
Tost matter-depths. Eternity
Assumes the places which they yield!
Not aged, howsoe'er she held
Her crown from everlastingly—
At once of youth, at once of eld,
While in that mansion which is hers,
To God and gods she ministers!

How the poet rises in his "singing clothes" embroidered all over with the mythos and the philosophy! Yet his eye is to the Throne: and we must not call him half a heathen by reason of a Platonic idiosyncrasy, seeing that the esoteric of the most suspicious turnings of his phraseology, is "Glory to the true God." For another ode, Paris should be here to choose it—we are puzzled among the beautiful. Here is one with a thought in it from Gregory's prose, which belongs to Synesius by right of conquest:—

O my deathless, O my blessed,
Maid-born, glorious son confessed,
O my Christ of Solyma!
I who earliest learnt to play
This measure for Thee, fain would bring
Its new sweet tune to citern-string—
Be propitious, O my King!
Take this music which is mine
Anthem'd from the songs divine!

We will sing thee deathless One,
God himself and God's great Son—
Of sire of endless generations,

Son of manifold creations!
Nature mutually endued,
Wisdom in infinitude!
God, before the angels burning—
Corpse, among the mortals mourning!
What time Thou wast pourèd mild
From an earthy vase defiled,
Magi with fair arts besprent,
At Thy new star's orient,
Trembled inly, wondered wild,
Questioned with their thoughts abroad—
"What then is the new-born child?
WHO the hidden God?
God, or corpse, or king?
Bring your gifts, oh hither bring
Myrrh for rite—for tribute, gold—
Frankincense for sacrifice!
God! Thine incense take and hold!
King! I bring thee gold of price!
Myrrh with tomb will harmonize!

For Thou, entombed, hast purified
Earthly ground and rolling tide,
And the path of dæmon nations,
And the free air's fluctuations,
And the depth below the deep!
Thou God, helper of the dead,
Low as Hades didst Thou tread!
Thou King, gracious aspect keep,
Take this music which is mine,
Anthem'd from the songs divine.

EUDOCIA—in the twenty-first year of the fifth century—wife of Theodosius, and empress of the world thought good to extend her sceptre—

(Hac claritate gemina
O gloriosa fœmina!)

over Homer's poems, and cento-ize them into an epic on the Saviour's life. She was the third fair woman accused of sacrificing the world for an apple, having moved her husband to wrath, by giving away his imperial gift of a large one to her own philosophic friend Paulinus; and being unhappily more learned than her two predecessors in the sin, in the course of her exile to Jerusalem, she took ghostly comfort, by separating Homer's ειδωλον from his φρενες. There she sat among the ruins of the holy city, addressing herself most unholily, with whatever good intentions and delicate fingers, to pulling Homer's gold to pieces bit by bit, even as the ladies of France devoted what remained to them of virtuous energy "pour parfiler" under the benignant gaze of Louis Quinze. She, too, who had no right of the purple to literary ineptitude —she, born no empress of Rome, but daughter of Leontius the Athenian, what had she to do with Homer, "parfilant"? Was it not enough for Homer that he was turned once, like her own cast imperial mantle, by Apolinarius into a Jewish epic, but that he must be unpicked again by Eudocia for a Christian epic? The reader, who has heard enough of centos, will not care to hear how she did it. That she did it was too much; and the deed recoiled. For mark the poetical justice of her destiny; let all readers mark it, and all writers, especially female writers, who may

be half as learned, and not half as fair,—that although she wrote many poems, one "On the Persian War," whose title and merit are recorded, not one, except this cento, has survived. The obliterative sponge, we hear of in Æschylus, has washed out every verse except this cento's "damned spot." This remains. This is called Eudocia: this stands for the daughter of Leontius, and this only in the world. O fair mischief! she is punished by her hand.

And yet, are we born critics any more than she was born an empress, that we should not have a heart? and is our heart stone, that it should not wax soft within us while the vision is stirred "between our eyelids and our eyes," of this beautiful Athenais, baptized once by Christian waters, and once by human tears, into Eudocia, the imperial mourner?—this learned pupil of a learned father, crowned once by her golden hair, and once by her golden crown, yet praised more for poetry and learning than for beauty and greatness by such grave writers as Socrates and Evagrius, the ecclesiastical historians?—this world's empress, pale with the purple of her palaces, an exile even on the throne from her Athens, and soon twice an exile, from father's grave and husband's bosom? We relent before such a vision. And what if, relentingly, we declare her innocent of the Homeric cento?—what if we find her "a whipping boy" to take the blame?—what if we write down a certain Proba "improba," and bid her bear it? For Eudocia having

been once a mark to slander, may have been so again; and Falconia Proba, having committed centoism upon Virgil, must have been capable of anything. The Homeric cento has been actually attributed to her by certain critics, with whom we would join in all earnestness our most sour voices, gladly, for Eudocia's sake, who is closely dear to us, and not malignly for Proba's, who was "improba" without our help. So shall we impute evil to only one woman, and she not an Athenian; while our worst wish, even to her, assumes this innoxious shape, that she had used a distaff rather than a stylus, though herself and the yet more "Sleeping Beauty" had owned one horoscope between them! Amen to our wish! A busy distaff and a sound sleep to Proba!

And now, that golden-haired, golden crowned daughter of Leontius, for whom neither the much learning nor the much sorrow drove Hesperus from her sovran eyes—let her pass on unblenched. Be it said of her, softly as she goes, by all gentle readers —"She is innocent, whether for centos or for apples! She wrote only such Christian Greek poems as Christians and poets might rejoice to read, but which perished with her beauty, as being of one seed with it."

Midway in the sixth century we encounter PAUL SILENTIARIUS, called so in virtue of the office held by him in the court of Justinian, and chiefly esteemed for his descriptive poem on the Byzantine church of

St. Sophia, which, after the Arian conflagration, was rebuilt gorgeously by the emperor. This church was not dedicated to a female saint, according to the supposition of many persons, but to the second person of the Trinity, the ἁγια σοφια—holy wisdom; while the poem being recited in the imperial presence, and the poet's gaze often forgetting to rise higher than the imperial smile, Paul Silentiarius dwelt less on the divine dedication and the spiritual uses of the place, than on the glory of the dedicator and the beauty of the structure. We hesitate, moreover, to grant to his poem the praise which has been freely granted to it by more capable critics, of its power to realize this beauty of structure to the eyes of the reader. It is highly elaborate and artistic; but the elaboration and art appear to us architectural far more than picturesque. There is no sequency, no congruity, no keeping, no light and shade. The description has reference to the working as well as to the work, to the materials as well as to the working. The eyes of the reader are suffered to approach the whole only in analysis, or rather in analysis analysed. Every part, part by part, is recounted to him excellently well—is brought close till he may touch it with his eyelashes; but when he seeks for the general effect, it is in pieces—there is none of it. Byron shows him more in the passing words—

> I have beheld Sophia's bright roofs swell
> Their glittering mass i' the sun—

than Silentiarius in all his poem. Yet the poem has abundant merit in diction and harmony; and, besides higher noblenesses, the pauses are modulated with an artfulness not commonly attained by these later Greeks, and the ear exults in an unaccustomed rhythmetic pomp which the inward critical sense is inclined to murmur at, as an expletive verbosity.

Whoever looketh with a mortal eye
To heaven's emblazoned forms, not steadfastly
With unreverted neck can bear to measure
That meadow-round of star-apparelled pleasure,
But drops his eyelids to the verdant hill,
Yearning to see the river run at will,
With flowers on each side,—and the ripening corn,
And grove thick set with trees, and flocks at morn
Leaping against the dews,—and olives twined,
And green vine-branches trailingly inclined,—
And the blue calmness skimmed by dripping oar
Along the Golden Horn.
But if he bring
His foot across this threshold, never more
Would he withdraw it; fain, with wandering
Moist eyes, and ever-turning head, to stay,
Since all satiety is driven away
Beyond the noble structure. Such a fane
Of blameless beauty hath our Cæsar raised
By God's perfective grace, and not in vain!
O emperor, these labours we have praised,
Draw down the glorious Christ's perpetual smile;
For thou, the high-peaked Ossa didst not pile
Upon Olympus' head, nor Pelion throw
Upon the neck of Ossa, opening so

The æther to the steps of mortals! no!
Having achieved a work more high than hope,
Thou didst not need these mountains as a slope
Whereby to scale the heaven! Wings take thee thither
From purest piety to highest æther.

The following passage, from the same 'Description,' is hard to turn into English, through the accumulative riches of the epithets. Greek words atone for their vain-glorious redundancy by their beauty, but we cannot think so of these our own pebbles:—

Who will unclose me Homer's sounding lips,
And sing the marble mead that over-sweeps
The mighty walls and pavements spread around,
Of this tall temple, which the sun has crowned?
The hammer with its iron tooth was loosed
Into Carystus' summit green, and bruised
The Phrygian shoulder of the dædal stone;—
This marble, coloured after roses fused
In a white air, and that, with flowers thereon
Both purple and silver, shining tenderly!
And that which in the broad fair Nile sank low
The barges to their edge, the porphyry's glow
Sown thick with little stars! and thou may'st see
The green stone of Laconia glitter free!
And all the Carian hill's deep bosom brings,
Streaked bow-wise, with a livid white and red,—
And all the Lydian chasm keeps covered,
A hueless blossom with a ruddier one
Soft mingled! all besides, the Libyan sun
Warms with his golden splendour, till he make
A golden yellow glory for his sake,
Along the roots of the Maurusian height;

'And all the Celtic mountains give to sight
From crystal clefts: black marbles dappled fair
With milky distillations here and there!
And all the onyx yields in metal-shine
Of precious greenness!—all that land of thine,
Ætolia, hath on even plains engendered
But not on mountain-tops,—a marble rendered
Here nigh to green, of tints which emeralds use,
Here with a sombre purple in the hues!
Some marbles are like new-dropt snow, and some
Alight with blackness!—Beauty's rays have come,
So congregate, beneath this holy dome!

And thus the poet takes us away from the church and dashes our senses and admirations down these marble quarries! Yet it is right for us to admit the miracle of a poem made out of stones! and when he spoke of unclosing Homer's lips on such a subject, he was probably thinking of Homer's ships, and meant to intimate that one catalogue was as good for him as another.

JOHN GEOMETRA arose in no propitious orient probably with the seventh century, although the time of his "elevation" appears to be uncertain within a hundred years.

He riseth slowly, as his sullen car
Had all the weights of sleep and death hung on it.

Plato, refusing his divine fellowship to any one who was not a geometrician or who was a poet, might have kissed our Johannes, who was not divine, upon both cheeks, in virtue of his other name and in vice

of his verses. He was the author of certain hymns to the Virgin Mary, as accumulative of epithets and admirations as ten of her litanies, inclusive of a pious compliment, which, however geometrically exact in its proportions, sounds strangely.

O health to thee! new living car of the sky
Afire on the wheels of four virtues at once!
O health to thee! Seat, than the cherubs more high,
More pure than the seraphs, *more broad than the thrones!*

Towards the close of the last hymn, the exhausted poet empties back something of the ascription into his own lap, by a remarkable "mihi quoque."

O health to me, royal one! if there belong
Any grace to my singing, that grace is from thee.
O health to me, royal one! if in my song
Thou hast pleasure, oh, thine is the grace of the glee!

We may mark the time of GEORGE PISIDA, about thirty years deep in the seventh century. He has been confounded with the rhetorical archbishop of Nicomedia, but held the office of scævophylax, only lower than the highest, in the metropolitan church of St. Sophia, and was a poet, singing half in the church and half in the court, and considerably nearer to the feet of the Emperor Heraclius than can please us in any measure. Hoping all things, however, in our poetical charity, we are willing to hope even this, —that the man whom Heraclius carried about with

him as a singing-man when he went to fight the Persians, and who sang and recited accordingly, and provided notes of admiration for all the imperial note of interrogation, and gave his admiring poems the appropriate and suggestive name of *acroases*—auscultations, things intended to be heard,—might nevertheless love Heraclius the fighting-man, not slave-wise or flatterer-wise, but man-wise or dog-wise, in good truth, and up to the brim of his praise; and so hoping, we do not dash the praise down as a libation to the infernal task-masters. Still it is an impotent conclusion to a free-hearted poet's musing on the "Six Days' Work," to wish God's creation under the sceptre of his particular friend! It looks as if the particular friend had an ear like Dionysius, and the poet—ah, the poet!—a mark as of a chain upon his brow in the shadow of his court laurel.

We shall not revive the question agitated among his contemporaries, whether Euripides or George Pisida wrote the best iambics; but that our George knew the secret of beauty, and that, having noble thoughts, he could utter them nobly, is clear, despite of Heraclius. That he is, besides, unequal; often coldly perplexed when he means to be ingenious, only violent when he seeks to be inspired; that he premeditates ecstasies, and is inclined to the attitudes of the orators; in brief, that he "not only" (and not seldom) "sleeps but *snores*"—are facts as true of him as the praise is. His Hexaëmeron, to which we

referred as his chief work, is rather a meditation or rhythmetical speech upon the finished creation, than a retrospection of the six days; and also there is more of Plato in it than of Moses. It has many fine things, and whole passages of no ordinary eloquence, though difficult to separate and select.

Whatever eyes seek God to view His Light,
As far as they behold Him close in night!
Whoever searcheth with insatiate balls
Th' abysmal glare, or gazeth on Heaven's walls
Against the fire-disk of the sun, the same
According to he vision he may claim,
Is dazzled from his sense. What soul of flame
Is called sufficient to view onward thus
The way whereby the sun's light came to us?

O distant Presence in fixed motion! Known
To all men, and inscrutable to one:
Perceived—uncomprehended! unexplained
To all the spirits, yet by each attained,
Because its God-sight is Thy work! O Presence,
Whatever holy greatness of Thine essence
Lie virtue-hidden, Thou hast given our eyes
The vision of Thy plastic energies—
Not shown in angels only (those create
All fiery-hearted, in a mystic state
Of bodiless body) but, if order be
Of natures more sublime than they or we,
In highest Heaven, or mediate æther, or
This world now seen, or one that came before
Or one to come,—quick in Thy purpose,—*there!*
Working in fire and water, earth and air—
In every tuneful star, and tree, and bird—

In all the swimming, creeping life unheard,
In all green herbs, and chief of all, in MAN.

There are other poems of inferior length, 'On the Persian War,' in three books, or, alas, "ausculta-tions,"—'The Heracliad,' again on the Persian war, and in two (of course) auscultations again,—'Against Severus,' 'On the Vanity of Life,' 'The War of the Huns,' and others. From the 'Vanity of Life,' which has much beauty and force, we shall take a last specimen:—

Some yearn to rule the state, to sit above,
And touch the cares of hate as near as love;
Some their own reason for tribunal take,
And for all thrones the humblest prayers they make;
Some love the orator's vain-glorious art,—
The wise love silence and the hush of heart,—
Some to ambition's spirit-curse are fain,
That golden apple with a bloody stain;
While some do battle in her face (more rife
Of noble ends) and conquer strife with strife:
And while your groaning tables gladden these,
Satiety's quick chariot to disease,
Hunger the wise man helps, to water, bread,
And light wings to the dreams about his head.

The truth becomes presently obvious, that—

The sage o'er all the world his sceptre waves,
And earth is common ground to thrones and graves.

JOHN DAMASCENUS, to whom we should not give by any private impulse of admiration the title of Chrysorrhoas, accorded to him by his times, lived at

Damascus, his native city, early in the eighth century, holding an unsheathed sword of controversy until the point drew down the lightning. He retired before the affront rather than the injury; and in company with his beloved friend and fellow poet, Cosmas of Jerusalem (whose poetical remains the writer of these remarks has vainly sought the sight of, and therefore can only, as by hearsay, ascribe some value to them), hid the remnant of his life in the monastery of Saba, where Phocas of the twelfth century looked upon the tomb of either poet. John Damascenus wrote several acrostics on the chief festivals of the churches, which are not much better, although very much longer, than acrostics need be. When he writes out of his heart, without looking to the first letters of his verses,—as, indeed, in his Anacreontic his eyes are too dim for iota-hunting,—he is another man, and almost a strong man; for the heart being sufficient to speak, we want no Delphic oracle—"Pan is NOT dead." In our selection from the Anacreontic hymn, the tears seem to trickle audibly; we welcome them as a Castalia, or, rather, "as Siloa's brook," flowing by an oracle more divine than any Grecian one:—

From my lips in their defilement,
From my heart in its beguilement,
From my tongue which speaks not fair,
From my soul stained everywhere,
O my Jesus, take my prayer!

Spurn me not for all it says,
Not for words and not for ways,
Not for shamelessness endued!
Make me brave to speak my mood,
O my Jesus, as I would!
Or teach me, which I rather seek,
What to do and what to speak.

I have sinnèd more than she,
Who learning where to meet with Thee,
And bringing myrrh, the highest-priced,
Anointed bravely, from her knee,
Thy blessed feet accordingly,
My God, my Lord, my Christ!
As Thou saidest not "Depart,"
To that suppliant from her heart,
Scorn me not, O Word, that art
The gentlest one of all words said!
But give Thy feet to me instead,
That tenderly I may them kiss
And clasp them close, and never miss
With over-dropping tears as free
And precious as that myrrh could be,
T' anoint them bravely from my knee!
Wash me with thy tears: draw nigh me,
That their salt may purify me.
THOU remit my sins who knowest
All the sinning to the lowest—
Knowest all my wounds, and seest
All the stripes Thyself decreest;
Yea, but knowest all my faith,
Seest all my force to death,
Hearest all my wailings low,
That mine evil should be so!
Nothing hidden but appears

In Thy knowledge, O Divine,
O Creator, Saviour mine—
Not a drop of falling tears,
Not a breath of inward moan,
Not a heart-beat—which is gone!

After this deep pathos of Christianity, we dare not say a word; we dare not even praise it as poetry: our heart is stirred, and not "idly." The only sound which can fitly succeed the cry of the contrite soul, is that of Divine condonation or of angelic rejoicing. Let us who are sorrowful still, be silent too.

Although doubts, as broad as four hundred years, separate the earliest and latest period talked of as the age of SIMEON METAPHRASTES by those "viri illustrissimi" the classical critics, we may set him down, without much peril to himself or us, at the close of the tenth century, or very early in the eleventh. He is chiefly known for his 'Lives of the Saints,' which have been lifted up as a mark both for honour and dishonour; which Psellus hints at as a favourite literature of the angels, which Leo Allatius exalts as chafing the temper of the heretics, and respecting which we, in an exemplary serenity, shall straightway accede to one-half of the opinion of Bellarmine—that the work speaketh not as things actually happened, but as they might have happened—"*non ut res gestæ fuerant, sed ut geri potuerant.*" *Our* half of this weighty opinion is the first clause—we demur upon "*ut geri potuerant,*"—and we need

not go further than the former to win a light of commentary for the term "metaphrases," applied to the saintly biographies in otherwise a doubtful sense, and worn obliquely upon the sleeve of the biographer Metaphrastes, in no doubtful token of his skill in metamorphosing things as they were into things as they might have been. And Simeon having received from Constantinople the honour of his birth within her walls, and returning to her the better honour of the distinctions and usefulness of his life,—so writeth Psellus, his encomiast, with a graceful turn of thought,—expired in an "odour of sanctity" befitting the biographer of all the saints,—breathing out from his breathless remains such an incense of celestial sweetness, that if it had not been for the maladroitness of certain unfragrant persons whose desecration of the next tomb acted inconstantly as a stopper, the whole earth might at this day be *metaphrased* to our nostrils, as steeped in an attar-gul of Eden or Ede!—we might be dwelling in a phœnix-nest at this day. Through the maladroitness, however, in question, there is lost to us every sweeter influence from the life and death of Simeon Metaphrastes than may result from the lives and deaths of his saints, and from other works of his, whether commentaries, orations, or poems; and we cannot add that the aroma from his writings bears any proportion in value to the fragrance from his sepulchre. Little of his poetry has reached us, and we are satisfied with the limit. There

were three Simeons, who did precede our Simeon, as the world knoweth, and whose titles were Stylitæ or Columnarii, because it pleased them in their saintly volition to take the highest place and live out their natural lives supernaturally, each upon the top of a column. Peradventure the columns which our Simeon refused to live upon, conspired against his poetry: peradventure it is on their account that we find ourselves between two alphabetic acrostics, written solemnly by his hand, and take up one wherein every alternate line begins with a letter of the alphabet; its companion in the couplet being left to run behind it, out of livery and sometimes out of breath. Will the public care to look upon such a curiosity? Will our verse-writers care to understand what harm may be done by a conspiration of columns—gods and men quite on one side? And will candid readers care to confess at last, that there is an earnestness in the poem, acrostic as it is,—a leaning to beauty's side,—which is above the acrosticism? Let us try:—

Ah, tears upon mine eyelids, sorrow on mine heart,
I bring Thee soul-repentance, Creator as Thou art!
Bounding joyous actions, deep as arrows go;
Pleasures self-revolving, issue into woe!
Creatures of our mortal, headlong rush to sin:
I have seen them; of them—ah me,—I have been!
Duly pitying Spirits, from your spirit-frame,
Bring your cloud of weeping,—worthy of the same!
Else I would be bolder; if that light of Thine,
Jesus, quell the evil, let it on me shine!

Fail me truth, is living, less than death forlorn,
When the sinner readeth—"better be unborn"?
God, I raise toward Thee both eyes of my heart,
With a sharp cry—"Help me!"—while mine hopes depart.
Help me! Death is bitter, all hearts comprehend;
But I fear beyond it—end beyond the end.
Inwardly behold me, how my soul is black;
Sympathize in gazing, do not spurn me back!
Knowing that Thy pleasure is not to destroy,
That Thou fain wouldst save me—this is all my joy.
Lo, the lion, hunting spirits in their deep,
(Stand beside me!) roareth—(help me!) nears to leap.
May'st Thou help me, Master! Thou art pure alone,
Thou alone art sinless, one Christ on a throne.
Nightly deeds I loved them, hated day's instead;
Hence this soul-involving darkness on mine head.
O Word, who constrainest things estranged and curst,
If Thy hand can save me, that work were the first!
Pensive o'er my sinning, counting all its ways,
Terrors shake me, waiting adequate dismays.
Quenchless glories many, hast Thou—many a rod—
Thou, too, hast Thy measures. Can I bear Thee, God?
Rend away my counting from my soul's decline,
Show me of the portion of those saved of Thine!
Slow drops of my weeping to Thy mercy run:
Let its rivers wash me, by that mercy won!
Tell me what is worthy, in our dreary now,
As the future glory? (madness!) what, as THOU?
Union, oh, vouchsafe me to Thy fold beneath,
Lest the wolf across me gnash his gory teeth!
View me, judge me gently! spare me, Master bland,
Brightly lift Thine eyelids, kindly stretch Thine hand!
Winged and choral angels! 'twixt my spirit lone,

And all deathly visions, interpose your own!
Yea, my Soul, remember death and woe inwrought—
After-death affliction, wringing earth's to nought!
Zone me, Lord, with graces! Be foundations built
Underneath me; save me! as Thou know'st and wilt!

The omission of our X, (in any case too sullen a letter to be employed in the service of an acrostic,) has permitted us to write line for line with the Greek; and we are able to infer, to the honour of the Greek poet, that, although he did not live upon a column, he was not far below one, in the virtue of self-mortification. We are tempted to accord him some more gracious and serious justice, by breaking away a passage from his 'Planctus Mariæ,' the lament of Mary on embracing the Lord's body; and giving a moment's insight into a remarkable composition, which, however deprived of its poetical right of measure, is, in fact, nearer to a poem, both in purpose and achievement, than any versified matter we have looked upon from this metaphrastic hand:—

"O, uncovered corse, yet Word of the Living One! self-doomed to be uplifted on the cross for the drawing of all men unto Thee,—what member of Thine hath no wound? O, my blessed brows, embraced by the thorn-wreath which is pricking at my heart! O beautiful and priestly One, who hadst not where to lay Thine head and rest, and now wilt lay it only in the tomb, resting *there;* sleeping, as Jacob said, a lion's sleep! O checks turned to the smiter! O lips

new hive for bees, yet fresh from the sharpness of vinegar and bitterness of gall! O mouth, wherein was no guile, yet betrayed by the traitor's kiss! O hand, creative of man, yet nailed to the cross, and since, stretched out unto Hades, with help for the first transgressor! O feet, once walking on the deep to hallow the waters of nature! O me, my son! . . . Where is Thy chorus of sick ones?—those whom Thou didst cure of their diseases, and bring back from the dead? Is none here, but only Nicodemus, to draw the nails from those hands and feet?—none here but only Nicodemus, to lift Thee from the cross, heavily, heavily, and lay Thee in these mother-arms, which bore Thee long ago, in thy babyhood, and were glad *then?* These hands, which swaddled Thee then, let them bind Thy grave-clothes now. And yet,—O, bitter funerals!——O, Giver of life from the dead, liest Thou dead before mine eyes? Must *I*, who said 'hush' beside Thy cradle, wail this passion upon Thy grave? *I*, who washed Thee in Thy first bath, must I drop on Thee these hotter tears? I, who raised Thee high in my maternal arms,—but *then* Thou leapedst,—*then* Thou sprangest up in Thy child-play!"

It is better to write so than to stand upon a column. And, although the passage does, both generally and specifically, in certain of its ideas, recall the antithetic eloquence of that Gregory Nazianzen before whom this Simeon must be dumb, we have

touched his "oration," so called, nearer than our subject could permit us to do any of Gregory's, because the 'Planctus' involves an imagined situation, is poetical in its design. Moreover, we must prepare to look downwards; the poets were descending from the gorgeous majesty of the hexameter and the severe simplicity of iambics down through the mediate "*versus politici*," a loose metre, adapted to the popular ear, to the lowest deep of a "measured prose,"—which has been likened, but which *we* will not liken, to the blank verse of our times. Presently, we may offer an example from Psellus of a prose acrostic—the reader being delighted with the prospect! "A whole silver threepence, mistress."

Michael Psellus lived midway in the eleventh century, and appears to have been a man of much aspiration toward the higher places of the earth. A senator of no ordinary influence, preceptor of the emperor Michael previous to that accession, he is supposed to have included in his instructions the advantages of sovereignty, and in his precepts the most subtle means of securing them. We were about to add, that his acquirements as a scholar were scarcely less imperial than those of his pupil as a prince: but the expression might have been inappropriate. There are cases not infrequent, not entirely opposite to the present case, and worthy always of all meditation by such intelligent men as affect extensive acquisition,—when acquirements are not ruled

by the man, but rule him. Whatever originates from the mind cannot obstruct her individual faculty; nay, whatever she receives inwardly and marks her power over by creating out of it a *tertium quid*, according to the law of the perpetual generation of spiritual verities, is not obstructive but impulsive to the evolution of faculty; but the erudition, whether it be erudition as the world showed it formerly, or miscellaneous literature, as the world shows it now, the accumulated acquirement of whatever character, which remains *extraneous* to the mind, is and must be in the same degree an obstruction and deformity. How many are there from Psellus to Bayle, bound hand and foot intellectually with the rolls of their own papyrus—men whose erudition has grown stronger than their souls! How many whom we would gladly see washed in the clean waters of a little ignorance, and take our own part in their refreshment! Not that knowledge is bad, but that wisdom is better; and that it is better and wiser in the sight of the angels of knowledge to think out one true thought with a thrush's song and a green light for all lexicon (or to think it without the light and without the song—because truth is beautiful, where they are not seen or heard)—than to mummy our benumbed souls with the circumvolutions of twenty thousand books. And so Michael Psellus was a learned man.

We have sought earnestly, yet in vain,—and the fact may account for our ill-humour,—a sight of cer-

tain iambics upon vices and virtues, and Tantalus and Sphinx, which are attributed to this writer, and cannot be in the moon after all:—earnestly, yet with no fairer encouragement to our desire than what befalls it from his *poems* 'On the Councils,' the first of which, and only the first, through the softness of our charities, we bring to confront the reader:—

Know the holy councils, King, to their utmost number,
Such as roused the impious ones from their world-wide slumber!
Seven in all those councils were: Nice the first containing,
When the godly master-soul Constantine was reigning,
What time at Byzantium, hallowed with the hyssop,
In heart and word, Metrophanes presided as archbishop!
It cut away Arius' tongue's maniacal delusion,
Which cut off from the Trinity the blessed Homoousion—
Blasphemed (O miserable man!) the maker of the creature,
And low beneath the Father cast the equal Filial nature.

The prose acrostic, contained in an office written by Psellus to the honour of Simeon, is elaborated on the words "I sing thee who didst write the metaphrases;" every sentence being insulated, and beginning with a charmed letter.

"Say in a dance how we shall go,
Who never could a measure know?"

why, thus—(and yet Psellus, who did *know* everything, wrote a synopsis of the metres!)—why, thus:

"Inspire me, Word of God, with a rhythmetic chant, for I am borne onward to praise Simeon Metaphrastes and Logothetes, as he is fitly called, the man worthy of admiration!

"Solemnly from the heavenly heights did the Blessed Ghost descend on thee, wise one, and finding thine heart pure, rested there, there verily in the body!"

Surely we need not write any more. But Michael Psellus was a very learned man.

JOHN of EUCHAITA (or Euchania, or Theodoropolis, —the three names do appear through the twilight to belong to one city) was a bishop, probably contemporary with Psellus—is only a poet now: we turn to see the voice which speaks to us. It is a voice with a soul in it, clear and sweet and living: and we who have walked long in the desert, leap up to its sound as to the dim flowing of a stream, and would take a deep breath by its side both for the weariness which is gone and the repose which is coming. But it is a rarer thing than a stream in the desert: it is a voice in the desert—the only voice of a city. The city may have three names, as we have said, or the three names may more fitly appertain to three cities—scholars knit their brows and wax doubtful as they talk; but a city denuded of its multitudes it surely is, ruined even of its ruins it surely is: no exhalation arises from its tombs, the foxes have lost their way to it, the bittern's cry is as dumb as the vanished popu

lation—only the Voice remains. John Mauropus, of Euchaita; Euchania, Theodoropolis—one living man among many dead, as the Arabian tale goes of the city of enchantment—one speechful voice among the silent, sole survivor of the breath which maketh words, effluence of the soul replacing the bittern's cry—speak to us! And thou shalt be to us as a poet; we will salute thee by that high name. For have we not stood face to face with Michael Psellus and him of the metaphrases? Surely as a poet may we salute *thee!*

His poetry has, as if in contrast to the scenery of circumstances in which we find it, or to the fatality of circumstances in which it has *not* been found, (and even Mr. Clarke in his learned work upon Sacred Literature, which is, however, incommunicative generally upon sacred poetry, appears unconscious of his being and his bishopric)—his poetry has a character singularly vital, fresh, and serene. There is nothing in it of the rapture of inspiration, little of the operativeness of art—nothing of imagination in a high sense, or of ear-service in any: he is not, he says, of those—

> Who rain hard with redundancies of words,
> And thunder and lighten out of eloquence.

His Greek being opposed to that of the Silentiarii and the Pisidæ by a peculiar simplicity and ease of collocation which the reader feels lightly in a moment, the thoughts move through its transparency with a

certain calm nobleness and sweet living earnestness, with holy upturned eyes and human tears beneath the lids, till the reader feels lovingly too. We startle him from his reverie with an octave note on a favourite literary fashion of the living London, drawn from the voice of the lost city; discovering by that sound the first serial illustrator of pictures by poems, in the person of our Johannes. Here is a specimen from an annual of Euchaita, or Euchania, or Theodoropolis—we may say "annual" although the pictures were certainly not in a book, but were probably ornaments of the beautiful temple in the midst of the city, concerning which there is a tradition. Here is a specimen selected for love's sake, because it "illustrates" a portrait of Gregory Nazianzen:—

> What meditates thy thoughtful gaze, my father?
> To tell me some new truth? Thou canst not so!
> For all that mortal hands are weak to gather,
> Thy blessed books unfolded long ago.

These are striking verses, upon the Blessed among women, weeping:—

> O Lady of the passion, dost thou weep?
> What help can we then through our tears survey,
> If such as thou a cause for wailing keep?
> What help, what hope, for us, sweet Lady, say?
> "Good man, it doth befit thine heart to lay
> More courage next it, having seen me so.
> All other hearts find other balm to-day—
> *The whole world's consolation is my woe!*'

Would any hear what can be said of a Transfiguration before Raffael's :—

> Tremble, spectator, at the vision won thee!
> Stand afar off, look downward from the height,
> Lest Christ too nearly seen should lighten on thee,
> And from thy fleshly eyeballs strike the sight,
> As Paul fell ruined by that glory white!
> Lo, the disciples prostrate, each apart,
> Each impotent to bear the lamping light!
> And all that Moses and Elias might,
> The darkness caught the grace upon her heart
> And gave them strength for! *Thou*, if evermore
> A God-voice pierce thy dark,—rejoice, adore

Our poet was as unwilling a bishop as the most sturdy of the "nolentes"; and there are poems written both in depreciation of, and in retrospective regret for, the ordaining dignity, marked by noble and holy beauties which we are unwilling to pass without extraction. Still we are constrained for space, and must come at last to his chief individual characteristic—to the gentle humanities which, strange to say, preponderate in the solitary voice—to the familiar smiles and sighs which go up and down in it to our ear. We will take the poem "To his old house," and see how the house survives by his good help, when the sun shines no more on the golden statue of Constantine :—

> O, be not angry with me, gentle house,
> That I have left thee empty and deserted!
> Since thou thyself that evil didst arouse,

In being to thy masters so false-hearted,
In loving none of those who did possess thee,
In minist'ring to no one to an end,
In no one's service caring to confess thee,
But loving still the change of friend for friend,
And sending the last, plague-wise, to the door!
And so, or ere thou canst betray and leave me.
I, a wise lord, dismiss thee, servitor,
And antedate the wrong thou may'st achieve me
Against my will, by what my will allows;
Yet not without some sorrow, gentle house!

For oh, beloved house, what time I render
My last look back on thee I grow more tender!
Pleasant possession, hearth for father's age,
Dear gift of buried hands, sole heritage!
My blood is stirred; and love, that learnt its play
From all sweet customs, moves mine heart thy way!
For thou wast all my nurse and helpful creature,
For thou wast all my tutor and my teacher;
In thee through lengthening toils I struggled deep,
In thee I watched all night without its sleep,
In thee I worked the wearier daytime out,
Exalting truth, or trying by a doubt.
. . . . . .
And oh, my father's roof, the memory leaves
Such pangs as break mine heart, beloved eaves!
But God's word conquers all.

He is forced to a strange land, reverting with this benediction to the "dearest house":—

Farewell, farewell, mine own familiar one,
Estranged for evermore from this day's sun,
Fare-thee-well so! Farewell, O second mother,
O nurse and help,—remains there not another

My bringer-up to some sublimer measure
Of holy childhood and perfected pleasure!
Now other spirits must thou tend and teach,
And minister thy quiet unto each,
For reasoning uses, if they love such use,
But nevermore to me. God keep thee, house,
God keep thee, faithful corner, where I drew
So calm a breath of life! And God keep you,
Kind neighbours! Though I leave you by His grace,
Let no grief bring a shadow to your face;
Because whate'er He willeth to be done
His will makes easy, makes the distant—one,
And soon brings all embraced before his throne!

We pass PHILIP SOLITARIUS, who lived at the close of this eleventh century, even as we have passed one or two besides of his fellow-poets; because they, having hidden themselves beyond the reach of our eyes and the endeavour of our hands, and we being careful to speak by knowledge rather than by testimony, nothing remains to us but this same silent passing—this regretful one, as our care to do better must testify—albeit our fancy will not, by any means, account them, with all their advantages of absence, "the best part of the solemnity."

Early in the twelfth century we are called to the recognition of THEODORE PRODROMUS, theologian, philosopher, and poet. His poems are unequal, consisting principally of a series of tetrastichs (Greek epigrams for lack of point, French epigrams for lack of poetry) upon the Old and New Testaments, and

the Life of Chrysostom,—all nearly as bare of the rags of literary merit as might be expected from the design; and three didactic poems upon Love, Providence, and against Bareus the heretic, into which the poet has cast the recollected life of his soul. The soul deports herself as a soul should, with a vivacity and energy which work outward and upward into eloquence. The sentiments are lofty, the expression free; there is an instinct to a middle and an end. Music we miss, even to the elementary melody: the poet thinks his thoughts, and speaks them; not indeed what all poets, so called, do esteem a necessary effort, and indeed what we should thank him for doing; but he *sings* thems in nowise, and they are not of that divine order which are crowned by right of their divinity with an inseparable aureole of sweet sound. His poem upon Love,—φιλια says the Greek word, but friendship does not answer to it,—is a dialogue between the personification and a stranger. It opens thus dramatically, the stranger speaking:

Love! Lady diademed with honour, whence
And whither goest thou? Thy look presents
Tears to the lid, thy mien is vext and low,
Thy locks fall wildly from thy drooping brow,
Thy blushes are all pale, thy garb is fit
For mourning in, and shoon and zone are loose!
So changed thou art to sadness every whit,
And all that pomp and purple thou didst use,
That seemly sweet, that new rose on the mouth,
Those fair-smoothed tresses, and that graceful zone,

Bright sandals, and the rest thou haddest on,
Are all departed, gone to nought together!
And now thou walkest mournful in the train
Of mourning women!—where and whence, again?
Love. From earth to God my Father.
Stranger. Dost thou say
That earth of Love is desolated?
Love. Yea!
It so much scorned me.
Stranger. Scorned?
Love. And cast me out
From its door.
Stranger. From its door?
Love. As if without
I had my lot to die!

Love consents to give her confidence to the wondering stranger; whereupon, as they sit in the shadow of a tall pine, she tells a Platonic story of all the good she had done in heaven before the stars, and the angels, and the throned Triad, and of all her subsequent sufferings on the melancholy and ungrateful earth. The poem, which includes much beauty, ends with a quaint sweetness in the troth-plighting of the stranger and the lady. May'st thou have been faithful to that oath, O Theodore Prodromus! but thou didst swear "too much to be believed—so *much*."

The poems 'On Providence' and 'Against Bareus' exceed the 'Love,' perhaps, in power and eloquence to the full measure of the degree in which they fall short of the interest of the latter's design. Whereupon we dedicate the following selection from the

'Providence' to Mr. Carlyle's "gigmen" and all "respectable persons":—

Ah me! what tears mine eyes are welling forth,
To witness in this synagogue of earth
Wise men speak wisely while the scoffers sing,
And rich men folly, for much honouring!
Melitus trifles,—Socrates decrees
Our further knowledge! Death to Socrates,
And long life to Melitus! . . .

. . . . . .

Chiefdom of evil, gold! blind child of clay,
Gnawing with fixèd tooth earth's heart away!
Go! perish from us! objurgation vain
To soulless nature, powerless to contain
One ill unthrust upon it! Rather perish
That turpitude of crowds, by which they cherish
Bad men for their good fortune, or condemn,
Because of evil fortune, virtuous men!

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

Oh, for a trumpet-mouth! an iron tongue
Sufficient for all speech! foundations hung
High on Parnassus' top to bear my feet!
So from that watch-tower, words which shall be meet,
I may out-thunder to the nations near me—
"Ye worshippers of gold, poor rich men, hear me!
Where do ye wander?—for what object stand?
That gold is earth's ye carry in your hand,
And floweth earthward; bad men have its curse
The most profusely: would yourselves be worse
So to be richer?—better in your purse?
Your royal purple—'twas a dog that found it!
Your pearl of price—a sickened oyster owned it!

Your glittering gems are pebbles, dust-astray;
Your palace pomp was wrought of wood and clay,
Smoothed rock and moulded plinth! earth's clay, earth's wood,
Earth's common-hearted stones! Is this your mood,
To honour *earth*, to worship *earth*, nor blush?"
What dost thou murmur, savage mouth? Hush, hush!
Thy wrath is vainly breathed. The depth to tread
Of God's deep judgments, was not Paul's, he said.

The "savage mouth" speaks in power, with whatever harshness: and we are tempted to contrast with this vehement utterance another short poem by the same poet, a little quaint withal, but light, soft, almost tuneful,—as written for a 'Book of Beauty,' and that not of Euchaita! The subject is "LIFE."

Oh, take me, thou mortal,—thy LIFE for thy praiser!
Thou hast met, found and seized me, and know'st what my ways are.
Nor leave me for slackness, nor yield me for pleasure,
Nor look up too saintly, nor muse beyond measure!
There's the veil from my head—see the worst of my mourning!
There are wheels to my feet—have a dread of their turning!
There are wings round my waist—I may flatter and flee thee!
There are yokes on my hands—fear the chains I decree thee!
Hold *me!* hold a shadow, the winds as they quiver;
Hold *me!* hold a dream, smoke, a track on the river.
Oh, take me thou mortal,—thy Life for thy praiser,

Thou hast met not and seized not, nor know'st what my ways are!
Nay, frown not, and shrink not, nor call me an aspen;
There 's the veil from my head! I have dropped from thy clasping!
A fall-back within it I soon may afford thee;
There are wheels to my feet—I may roll back toward thee!
There are wings round my waist—I may flee back and clip thee!
There are yokes on my hands—I may soon cease to whip thee!
Take courage! I rather would hearten than hip thee!

JOHN TZETZA divides the twelfth century with his name, which is not a great one. In addition to an iambic fragment upon education, he has written indefatigably in the metre *politicus*, what must be read, if read at all, with a corresponding energy,—thirteen "chiliads," of "variæ historiæ," so called after Ælian's,—Ælian's without the "honey-tongue,"—very various histories indeed, about crocodiles and flies, and Plato's philosophy and Cleopatra's nails, and Samson and Phidias, and the resurrection from the dead, and the Calydonian boar,—"everything under the sun" being, in fact, their imperfect epitome. The omission is simply POETRY! there is no apparent consciousness of her entity in the mind of this versifier; no aspiration towards her presence, not so much as a sigh upon her absence. We do not, indeed, become aware, in the whole course of this

laborious work, of much unfolding of faculty—take it lower than the poetical; of nothing much beyond an occasional dry, sly, somewhat boorish humour, which being good humour besides, would not be a bad thing were its traces only more extended. But the general level of the work is a dull talkativeness, a prosy adversity, who is no "Daughter of Jove," and a slumberousness without a dream. We adjudge to our reader the instructive history of the Phœnix.

A phœnix is a single bird and synchronous with nature;
The peacock cannot equal him in beauty or in stature.
In radiance he outshines the gold; the world in wonder yieldeth;
His nest he fixeth in the trees, and all of spices buildeth.
And when he dies, a little worm, from out his body twining,
Doth generate him back again whene'er the sun is shining.
He lives in Ægypt, and he dies in Æthiopia only, as
Asserts Philostratus, who wrote the Life of Apollonius.
And, (as the wise Ægyptian scribe, the holy scribe Chœremon,
Hath entered on these Institutes, all centre their esteemon,)
Seven thousand years and six of age, this phœnix of the story,
Expireth from the fair Nile side, whereby he had his glory.

In the early part of the fourteenth century, Manuel Phile, pricked emulously to the heart by the

successful labours of Tzetza, embraced into identity with himself the remaining half of Ælian, and developed in his poetical treatise 'On the Properties of Animals,' to which Isachimus Camerarius provided a conclusion—the 'Natural History' of that industrious and amusing Greek-Roman. The Natural History is translated into verse, but by no means glorified; and yet the poet of animals, Phile, has carried away far more of the Ælian honey clinging to the edges of his *patera*, than the poet of the Chiliads did ever wot of. What we find in him is not beauty, what we hear in him is not music, but there is an open feeling for the beautiful which stirs at a word, and we have a scarcely confessed contentment in hearkening to those twice-told stories of birds and beasts and fishes, measured out to us in the low monotony of his chanting voice. Our selections shall say nothing of the live grasshopper, called, with the first breath of this paper, an emblem of the vital Greek tongue; because the space left to us closes within our sight, and the science of the age does not thirst to receive, through our hands, the history of grasshoppers, according to Ælian or Phile either. Everybody knows what Phile tells us here, that grasshoppers live upon morning dew, and cannot sing when it is dry. Everybody knows that the lady grasshopper sings not at all. And if the moral, drawn by Phile from this latter fact, of the advantage of silence in the female sex generally, be true and

important, it is also too obvious to exact our enforcement of it. Therefore we pass by the grasshopper, and the nightingale too, for all her fantastic song; and hasten to introduce to European naturalists a Philhellenic species of *heron*, which has escaped the researches of Cuvier, and the peculiarities of which may account to the philosophic reader for that instinct of the "wisdom of our forefathers," which established an English university in approximation with the Fens. It is earnestly to be hoped that the nice ear in question for the Attic dialect may still be preserved among the herons of Cambridgeshire:—

A Grecian island nourisheth to bless
A race of herons in all nobleness.
If some barbarian bark approach the shore,
They hate, they flee,—no eagle can outsoar!
But if by chance an Attic voice be wist,
They grow softhearted straight, philhellenist;
Press on in earnest flocks along the strand,
And stretch their wings out to the comer's hand.
Perhaps he nears them with a gentle mind,—
They love his love, though foreign to their kind!
For so the island giveth wingèd teachers,
In true love lessons, to all wingless creatures.

He has written, besides, 'A Dialogue between Mind and Phile,' and other poems; and we cannot part without taking from him a more solemn tone, which may sound as an "Amen" to the good we have said of him. The following address to the Holy Spirit is concentrated in expression:—

O living Spirit, O falling of God-dew,
O Grace which dost console us and renew,
O vital light, O breath of angelhood,
O generous ministration of things good,
Creator of the visible, and best
Upholder of the great unmanifest
Power infinitely wise, new boon sublime
Of science and of art, constraining might,
In whom I breathe, live, speak, rejoice, and write,—
Be with us in all places, for all time!

"And now," saith the patientest reader of all, "you have done. Now we have watched out the whole night of the world with you, by no better light than these poetical rushlights, and the wicks fail, and the clock of the universal hour is near upon the stroke of the seventeenth century, and you have surely done!" Surely *not*, we answer; for we see a hand which the reader sees not, which beckons us over to Crete, and clasps within its shadowy fingers a roll of hymns Anacreontical, written by MAXIMUS MARGUNIUS: and not for the last of our readers would we lose this last of the Greeks, owing him salutation. Yet the hymns have, for the true Anacreontic fragrance, a musty odour, and we have scant praise for them in our nostrils. Their inspiration is from Gregory Nazianzen, whose "Soul and Body" are renewed in them by a double species of transmigration; and although we kiss the feet of Gregory's high excellences, we cannot admit any one of them to be a safe conductor of poetical inspiration. And

in union with Margunius's plagiaristic tendencies, there is a wearisome lengthiness, harder to bear. He will knit you to the whole length of an "Honi soit qui mal y pense," till you fall asleep to the humming of the stitches, what time you should be reading the "moral." We ourselves once dropped into a "distraction," as the French say,—for nothing could be more be more different from what the English say, than our serene state of self-abnegation,—at the beginning of a house-building by this Maximus Margunius: when, reading on some hundred lines with our bare bodily eyes, and our soul starting up on a sudden to demand a measure of the progress, behold, he was building it still, with a trowel in the same hand: it was not forwarder by a brick. The swallows had time to hatch two nestfulls in a chimney while he finished the chimney-pot! Nevertheless he has moments of earnestness, and they leave beauties in their trace. Let us listen to this extract from his fifth hymn:—

Take me as a hermit lone
With a desert life and moan;
Only Thou anear to mete
Slow or quick my pulse's beat;
Only Thou, the night to chase,
With the sunlight in Thy face!
Pleasure to the eyes may come
From a glory seen afar,
But if life concentre gloom
Scattered by no little star,

Then, how feeble, God, we are!
Nay, whatever bird there be,
(Æther by his flying stirred,)
He, in this thing, must be free—
And I, Saviour, am Thy bird,
Pricking with an open beak
At the words that Thou dost speak!
Leave a breath upon my wings,
That above these nether things
I may rise to where Thou art,
I may flutter next Thine heart!
For if a light within me burn,
It must be darkness in an urn,
Unless, within its crystalline,
That unbeginning light of Thine
Shine!—oh, Saviour, *let* it shine!

He is the last of our Greeks. The light from Troy city, with which all Greek glory began, "threw three-times six," said Æschylus, that man with a soul,—beacon after beacon, into the heart of Greece. "Three-times six," too, threw the light from Greece, when her own heart-light had gone out like Troy's, onward along the ridges of time. Three-times six—but what faint beacons are the last!—sometimes only a red brand; sometimes only a small trembling flame; sometimes only a white glimmer as of ashes breathed on by the wind; faint beacons and far! How far! We have watched them along the cloudy tops of the great centuries, through the ages dark but for them,—and now stand looking with eyes of farewell upon the last pale sign on the last mist-bound hill. But

it is the sixteenth century. Beyond the ashes on the hill a red light is gathering; above the falling of the dews a great sun is rising: there is a rushing of life and song upward—let it still be UPWARD! Shakespeare is in the world! And the Genius of English Poetry, she who only of all the earth is worthy, (Goethe's spirit may hear us say so, and smile,) stooping, with a royal gesture, to kiss the dead lips of the Genius of Greece, stands up her successor in the universe, by virtue of that chrism, and in right of her own crown.

THE BOOK OF THE POETS.

THE BOOK OF THE POETS.

THE voice of the turtle is heard in the land. The green book of the earth is open, and the four winds are turning the leaves: while Nature, chief secretary to the creative Word, sits busy at her inditing of many a lovely poem,—her 'Flower and the Leaf' on this side, her 'Cuckoo and the Nightingale' on that, her 'Paradise of Dainty Devices' in and out among the valleys, her 'Polyolbion' away across the hills, her 'Britannia's Pastorals' on the home meadows, her sonnets of tufted primroses, her lyrical outgushings of May blossoming, her epical and didactic solemnities of light and shadow, and many an illustrative picture to garnish the universal annual. What book shall we open side by side with Nature's? First, the book of God. 'The Book of the Poets' may well come next—even this book, if it deserve indeed the nobility of its name.

But this book, which is not Campbell's Selection from the British Poets, nor Southey's, nor different from either by being better, resembles many others of the nobly named, whether princes or hereditary legislators, in bearing a name too noble for its desert. This book, consisting of short extracts from the books of the poets, beginning with Chaucer, ending with Beattie, and missing sundry by the way,—we call it indefinitely 'A book of the poets,' and leave it thankful. The extracts from Chaucer are topsy-turvy—one from the Canterbury Tales' prologue thrown in between two from the Knight's Tale; while Gower may blame "his fortune"—

> (And some men hold opinion
> That it is constellation,)

for the dry specimen crumbled off from his man-mountainism. Of Lydgate there is scarcely a page; of Occleve, Hawes, and Skelton—the two last especially interesting in poetical history,—of Sackville, and the whole generation of dramatists, not a word. "The table is not full," and the ringing on it of Phillips's 'Splendid Shilling,' will not bribe us to endurance. What! place for Pomfret's platitudes, and no place for Shakespeare's divine sonnets? and no place for Jonson's and Fletcher's lyrics? Do lyrics and sonnets perish out of place whenever their poets make tragedies too, quenched by the entity of tragedy? We suggest that Shakespeare has nearly as

much claim to place in any possible book of the poets (though also a book of the poetasters) as ever can have John Hughes, who "as a poet, is chiefly known," saith the critical editor, "by his tragedy of the 'Siege of Damascus.'" Let this book therefore accept our boon, and remain a book of the poets, thankfully if not gloriously,—while we, on our own side, may be thankful too, that in the present days of the millennium of Jeremy Bentham, a more literally golden age than the laureates of Saturnus dreamed withal,—any memory of the poets should linger with the booksellers, and "come up this way" with the spring. The thing is good, in that it is at all. Send a little child into a garden, and he will be sure to bring you a nosegay worth having, though the red weed in it should "side the lily," and sundry of the prettiest flowers be held stalk upwards. Flowers are flowers and poets are poets, and 'A book of the poets' must be right welcome at every hour of the clock.

For the preliminary essay, which is very moderately well done, we embrace it, with our fingers at least, in taking up the volume. It pleases us better on the solitary point of the devotional poets than Mr. Campbell's beautiful treatise, doing, as it seems to us, more frank justice to the Withers's, the Quarles's, and the Crashaws. Otherwise the criticism and philosophy to be found in it are scarcely of the happiest,—although even the first astonishing paragraph which justifies the utility of poetry on the ground of its

being an attractive variety of language, a persuasive medium for abstract ideas, (as reasonable were the justification of a seraph's essence deduced from the cloud beneath his foot!)—shall not provoke us back to discontent from the vision of the poets of England, suggested by the title of this 'Book,' and stretching along gloriously to our survey.

Our poetry has an heroic genealogy. It arose where the sun rises, in the far East. It came out from Arabia, and was tilted on the lance-heads of the Saracens into the heart of Europe, Armorica catching it in rebound from Spain, and England from Armorica. It issued in its first breath from Georgia, wrapt in the gathering-cry of Persian Odin: and passing from the orient of the sun to the antagonistic snows of Iceland, and oversweeping the black pines of Germany and the jutting shores of Scandinavia, and embodying in itself all wayside sounds, even to the rude shouts of the brazen-throated Cimbri,—so modified, multiplied, resonant in a thousand Runic echoes, it rushed abroad like a blast into Britain. In Britain, the Arabic Saracenic Armorican, and the Georgian Gothic Scandinavian mixed sound at last; and the dying suspirations of the Grecian and Latin literatures, the last low stir of the 'Gesta Romanorum,' with the apocryphal personations of lost authentic voices, breathed up together through the fissures of the rent universe, to help the new intonation and accomplish the cadence. Genius was thrust onward

to a new slope of the world. And soon, when simpler minstrels had sat there long enough to tune the ear of the time,—when Layamon and his successors had hummed long enough, like wild bees, upon the lips of our infant poetry predestined to eloquence,—then Robert Langlande, the monk, walking for cloister "by a wode's syde," on the Malvern Hills, took counsel with his holy "Plowman," and sang of other visions than their highest ridge can show. While we write, the woods upon those beautiful hills are obsolete, even as Langlande's verses; scarcely a shrub grows upon the hills! but it is well for the thinkers of England to remember reverently, while, taking thought of her poetry, they stand among the gorse,—that if we may boast now of more honoured localities, of Shakespeare's "rocky Avon," and Spenser's "soft-streaming Thames," and Wordsworth's "Rydal Mere," still our first holy poet-ground is there.

But it is in Chaucer we touch the true height, and look abroad into the kingdoms and glories of our poetical literature,—it is with Chaucer that we begin our 'Books of the Poets,' our collections and selections, our pride of place and name. And the genius of the poet shares the character of his position: he was made for an early poet, and the metaphors of dawn and spring doubly become him. A morning-star, a lark's exaltation, cannot usher in a glory better. The "cheerful morning face," "the breezy call of incense-breathing morn," you recognize in his

countenance and voice: it is a voice full of promise and prophecy. He is the good omen of our poetry, the "good bird," according to the Romans, "the best good angel of the spring," the nightingale, according to his own creed of good luck, heard before the cuckoo.

Up rose the sunne, and uprose Emilie,

and uprose her poet, the first of a line of kings, conscious of futurity in his smile. He is a king and inherits the earth, and expands his great soul smilingly to embrace his great heritage. Nothing is too high for him to touch with a thought, nothing too low to dower with an affection. As a complete creature cognate of life and death, he cries upon God,—as a sympathetic creature he singles out a daisy from the universe ("si douce est la marguerite,") to lie down by half a summer's day and bless it for fellowship. His senses are open and delicate, like a young child's —his sensibilities capacious of supersensual relations, like an experienced thinker's. Child-like, too, his tears and smiles lie at the edge of his eyes, and he is one proof more among the many, that the deepest pathos and the quickest gaieties hide together in the same nature. He is too wakeful and curious to lose the stirring of a leaf, yet not too wide awake to see visions of green and white ladies between the branches; and a fair house of fame and a noble court of love are built and holden in the winking of his

eyelash. And because his imagination is neither too "high fantastical" to refuse proudly the gravitation of the earth, nor too "light of love" to lose it carelessly, he can create as well as dream, and work with clay as well as cloud; and when his men and women stand close by the actual ones, your stop-watch shall reckon no difference in the beating of their hearts. He knew the secret of nature and art,—that truth is beauty,—and saying "I will make 'A Wife of Bath' as well as Emilie, and you shall remember her as long," we do remember her as long. And he sent us a train of pilgrims, each with a distinct individuality apart from the pilgrimage, all the way from Southwark and the Tabard Inn, to Canterbury and Becket's shrine: and their laughter comes never to an end, and their talk goes on with the stars, and all the railroads which may intersect the spoilt earth for ever, cannot hush the "tramp, tramp" of their horses' feet.

Controversy is provocative. We cannot help observing, because certain critics observe otherwise, that Chaucer utters as true music as ever came from poet or musician; that some of the sweetest cadences in all our English are extant in his—"swete upon his tongue" in completest modulation. Let "Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness join" the Io pæan of a later age, the "*eurekamen*" of Pope and his generation. Not one of the "Queen Anne's men," measuring out tuneful breath upon their fingers, like

ribbons for topknots, did know the art of versification as the old rude Chaucer knew it. Call him rude for the picturesqueness of the epithet; but his verse has, at least, as much regularity in the sense of true art, and more manifestly in proportion to our increasing acquaintance with his dialect and pronunciation, as can be discovered or dreamed in the French school. Critics indeed have set up a system based upon the crushed atoms of first principles, maintaining that poor Chaucer wrote by accent only! Grant to them that he counted no verses on his fingers; grant that he never disciplined his highest thoughts to walk up and down in a paddock—ten paces and a turn; grant that his singing is not after the likeness of their sing-song: but there end your admissions. It is our ineffaceable impression, in fact, that the whole theory of accent and quantity held in relation to ancient and modern poetry stands upon a fallacy, totters rather than stands; and that when considered in connection with such old moderns as our Chaucer, the fallaciousness is especially apparent. Chaucer wrote by quantity, just as Homer did before him, just as Goethe did after him, just as all poets must. Rules differ, principles are identical. All rhythm presupposes quantity. Organ-pipe, or harp, the musician plays by time. Greek or English, Chaucer or Pope, the poet sings by time. What is this accent but a stroke, an emphasis, with a successive pause to make complete the time? And what is the difference between

this accent and quantity but the difference between a harp-note and an organ-note? otherwise, quantity expressed in different ways? It is as easy for matter to subsist out of space, as music out of time.

Side by side with Chaucer comes Gower, who is ungratefully disregarded too often, because side by side with Chaucer. He who rides in the king's chariot will miss the people's "hic est." Could Gower be considered apart, there might be found signs in him of an independent royalty, however his fate may seem to lie in waiting for ever in his brother's antechamber, like Napoleon's tame kings. To speak our mind, he has been much undervalued. He is nailed to a comparative degree; and everybody seems to make it a condition of speaking of him, that something be called inferior within him, and something superior, out of him. He is laid down flat, as a dark background for "throwing out" Chaucer's lights; he is used as a που στω for leaping up into the empyrean of Chaucer's praise. This is not just nor worthy. His principal poem, the 'Confessio Amantis,' preceded the 'Canterbury Tales,' and proves an abundant fancy, a full head and full heart, and neither ineloquent. We do not praise its design,—in which the father-confessor is set up as a storyteller, like the Bishop of Tricca, "avec l'âme," like the Cardinal de Retz, "le moins ecclésiastique du monde,"—while we admit that he tells his stories as if born to the manner of it, and that they are not much the graver, nor,

peradventure, the holier either, for the circumstance of the confessorship. They are indeed told gracefully and pleasantly enough, and if with no superfluous life and gesture, with an active sense of beauty in some sort, and as flowing a rhythm as may bear comparison with many octosyllabics of our day; Chaucer himself having done more honour to their worth as stories than we can do in our praise, by adopting and crowning several of their number for king's sons within his own palaces. And this recalls that, at the opening of one glorious felony, the Man of Lawe's tale, he has written, a little unlawfully and ungratefully considering the connection, some lines of harsh significance upon poor Gower,—whence has been conjectured by the grey gossips of criticism, a literary jealousy, an unholy enmity, nothing less than a soul-chasm between the contemporary poets. We believe nothing of it; no, nor of the Shakespeare and Jonson feud after it:

> To alle such cursed stories we saie fy.

That Chaucer wrote in irritation is clear: that he was angry seriously and lastingly, or beyond the pastime of passion spent in a verse as provoked by a verse, there appears to us no reason for crediting. But our idea of the nature of the irritation will expound itself in our idea of the offence, which is here in Dan Gower's proper words, as extracted from the Ladie Venus's speech in the 'Confessio Amantis.'

And grete well Chaucer whan ye mete,
As my disciple and poëte!—

. . . . . .

Forthy now in his daiës old,
Thou shalt him tellë this message,
That he upon his latter age,
To sette an ende of alle his werke
As he who is mine ownë clerke,
Do make his testament of love.

We would not slander Chaucer's temper,—we believe, on the contrary, that he had the sweetest temper in the world,—and still it is our conviction, none the weaker, that he was far from being entirely pleased by this "message." We are sure he did not like the message, and not many poets would. His "elvish countenance" might well grow dark, and "his sugred mouth" speak somewhat sourly, in response to such a message. Decidedly, in our own opinion, it was an impertinent message, a provocative message, a most inexcusable and odious message! Waxing hotter ourselves the longer we think of it, there is the more excuse for Chaucer. For, consider, gentle reader! this indecorous message preceded the appearance of the Canterbury Tales, and proceeded from a rival poet in the act of completing his principal work,—its plain significance being "I have done my poem, and you cannot do yours because you are superannuated." And this, while the great poet addressed was looking forward farther than the visible horizon, his eyes dilated with a mighty purpose. And

to be counselled by this, to shut them forsooth, and take his crook and dog and place in the valleys like a grey shepherd of the Pyrenees—he, who felt his foot strong upon the heights! he, with no wrinkle on his forehead deep enough to touch the outermost of inward smooth dreams—he, in the divine youth of his healthy soul, in the quenchless love of his embracing sympathies, in the untired working of his perpetual energies,—to "make an ende of alle his werke" and be old, as if he were not a poet! "Go to, O vain man,"—we do not reckon the age of the poet's soul by the shadow on the dial! Enough that it falls upon his grave.

Occleve and Lydgate both breathed the air of the world while Chaucer breathed it, although surviving him so long as rather to take standing as his successors than contemporaries. Both called him "master" with a faithful reverting tenderness, and, however we are bound to distinguish Lydgate as the higher poet of the two, Occleve's 'Alas' may become the other's lips—

> Alas, that thou thine excellent prudence
> In thy bed mortell mightest not bequeath!

For alas! it was not bequeathed. Lydgate's Thebaid, attached by its introduction to the 'Canterbury Tales,' gives or enforces the occasion for sighing comparisons with the master's picturesque vivacity, while equally in delicacy and intenseness we admit no progress in

the disciple. He does, in fact, appear to us so much overrated by the critics, that we are tempted to extend to his poetry his own admission on his monkish dress,—

> I wear a habit of perfection
> Although my life agree not with that same,

and to opine concerning the praise and poetry taken together, that the latter agrees not with that same. An elegant poet—"poeta elegans"—was he called by the courteous Pits,—a questionable compliment in most cases, while the application in the particular one agrees not with that same. An improver of the language he is granted to be by all; and a voluminous writer of respectable faculties, in his position, could scarcely help being so: he has flashes of genius, but they are not prolonged to the point of warming the soul,—can strike a bold note, but fails to hold it on,—attains to moments of power and pathos, but wears, for working days, no habit of perfection.

These are our thoughts of Lydgate; and yet when he ceased his singing, none sang better; there was silence in the land. In Scotland, indeed, poet-tongues were not all mute; the air across the borders "gave delight and hurt not." Here in the South it was otherwise: and unless we embrace in our desolation such *poems* as the rhyming chronicles of Harding and Fabian, we must hearken for music to the clashing of "Bilboa blades," and be content that the wars of the

red and white roses should silence the warbling of the nightingales. That figure dropped to our pen's point, and the reader may accept it as a figure—as no more. To illustrate by figures the times and the seasons of poetical manifestation and decay, is at once easier and more reasonable than to attempt to account for them by causes. We do not believe that poets multiply in peace-time like sheep and sheaves, nor that they fly, like partridges, at the first beating of the drum; and we do believe, having a previous faith in the pneumatic character of their gift, that the period of its bestowment is not subject to the calculations of our philosophy. Let, therefore, the long silence from Chaucer and his disciples down to the sixteenth century, be left standing as a fact undisturbed by any good reasons for its existence, or by any other company than some harmless metaphor—harmless and ineffectual as a glow-worm's glitter at the foot of a colossal statue of Harpocrates. Call it, if you please, as Warton does, "a nipping frost succeeding a premature spring;" or call it, because we would not think our Chaucer premature, or the silence cruel—the trance of English Poetry: her breath, once emitted creatively, indrawn and retained,—herself sinking into deep sleep, like the mother of Apollonius before the glory of a vision, to awaken, to leap up (ἐξεθορε says Philostratus, the narrator) in a flowery meadow, at the clapping of the white wings of a chorus of encircling swans. We shall endeavour to realize this awaking.

Is Hawes a swan? a black (letter) swan? Certain voices will "say nay, say nay;" and already, and without our provocation, he seems to us unjustly depreciated. Warton was called "the indulgent historian of our poetry," for being so kind as to discover "one fine line" in him! What name must the over-kind have, in whose susceptible memories whole passages stand up erect, claiming the epithet or the like of the epithet,—and that, less as the largess of the indulgent than the debt of the just? Yet Langlande's 'Piers Plowman,' and Chaucer's 'House of Fame,' and Lydgate's 'Temple of Glasse,' and the 'Pastyme of Plesure,' by Stephen Hawes, are the four columnar marbles, the four allegorical poems, on whose foundation is exalted into light the great allegorical poem of the world, Spenser's 'Faery Queen.' There was a force of suggestion which preceded Sackville's, and Hawes uttered it. His work is very grave for a pastime, being a course of instruction upon the seven sciences, the trivium and quadrivium of the schools; whereby Grand Amour, scholar and hero, wooing and winning Belle Pucelle, marries her according to the "*lex ecclesiæ*," is happy "all the rest of his life" by the *lex* of all matrimonial romances,—and at leisure and in old age, dies by the *lex naturæ*. He tells his own story quite to an end, including the particulars of his funeral and epitaph; and is considerate enough to leave the reader in full assurance of his posthumous reputation. And now let those who smile at

the design dismiss their levity before the poet's utterance:—

> O mortall folke, you may beholde and see
> Howe I lye here, sometime a mighty knight.
> The ende of joye and all prosperitie
> Is death at last thorough his course and might.
> After the day there cometh the dark night,
> For though the day appear ever so long,
> *At last the bell ringeth to even song.*

—it "ringeth" in our ear with a soft and solemn music to which the soul is prodigal of echoes. We may answer for the poetic faculty of its "maker." He is, in fact, not merely ingenious and fanciful, but abounds—the word, with an allowance for the unhappiness of his subject, is scarcely too strong,—with passages of thoughtful sweetness and cheerful tenderness, at which we are constrained to smile and sigh, and both for "pastyme."

> Was never payne but it had joye at laste
> In the fayre morrow.

There is a lovely cadence! And then Amour's courtship of his "swete ladie"—a "cynosure" before Milton's!—conducted as simply, yet touchingly, as if he were innocent of the seven deadly sciences, and knew no more of "the Ladye Grammere" than might become a troubadour:—

> O swete ladie, the true and perfect star
> Of my true heart! O, take ye now pitie!

Think on my payne which am tofore you here,—
With your swete eyes behold you me, and see
How thought and woe by great extremitie
Hath changed my colour into pale and wan!
It was not so when I to love began.

The date assigned to this 'Pastyme of Plesure' is 1506, some fifty years before the birth of Spenser. Whether it was written in vain for Spenser, judge ye To the present generation it is covered deep with the dust of more than three centuries, and few tongues ask above the place,—"what lies here?"

Barclay is our next swan; and verily might be mistaken, in any sort taken, by naturalists, for a crow. He is our first writer of eclogues, the translator of the 'Ship of Fools,' and a thinker of his own thoughts with sufficient intrepidity.

Skelton "floats double, swan and shadow," as poet laureate of the University of Oxford, and "royal orator" of Henry VII. He presents a strange specimen of a court-poet, and if, as Erasmus says, "Britannicarum literarum lumen" at the same time,—the light is a pitchy torchlight, wild and rough. Yet we do not despise Skelton: despise him? it were easier to hate. The man is very strong; he triumphs, foams, is rabid, in the sense of strength; he mesmerizes our souls with the sense of strength—it is as easy to despise a wild beast in a forest, as John Skelton, poet laureate. He is as like a wild beast, as a poet laureate can be. In his wonderful dominion over language, he tears it,

as with teeth and paws, ravenously, savagely: devastating rather than creating, dominant rather for liberty than for dignity. It is the very *sans-culottism* of eloquence; the oratory of a Silenus drunk with anger only. Mark him as the satyr of poets! fear him as the Juvenal of satyrs! and watch him with his rugged, rapid, picturesque savageness, his "breathless rhymes," to use the fit phrase of the satirist Hall, or—

> His rhymes all ragged,
> Tattered, and jagged,

to use his own,—climbing the high trees of Delphi, and pelting from thence his victim underneath, whether priest or cardinal, with rough-rinded apples! And then ask, could he write otherwise than so? The answer is this opening to his poem of the 'Bouge of Court,' and the impression inevitable, of the serious sense of beauty and harmony to which it gives evidence.

> In autumn when the sun *in virgine*
> By radiant heat enripened hath our corne,
> When Luna, full of mutabilitie,
> As empëress, the diadem hath worne
> Of our pole Arctic, smiling as in scorn
> At our folie and our unstedfastnesse—

But our last word of Skelton must be, that we do not doubt his influence for good upon our language. He was a writer singularly fitted for beating out the knots of the cordage, and straining the lengths to

extension; a rough worker at rough work. Strong, rough Skelton! We can no more deride him than my good lord cardinal could. If our critical eyebrows must motion contempt at somebody of the period, we choose Tusser, and his five hundred points of good husbandry and housewifery. Whatever we say of Tusser, no fear of harming a poet,—

Make ready a bin
For chaff to lie in,

and there may be room *therein*, in compliment to the author of the proposition, for his own verses.

Lord Surrey passes as the tuner of our English nearly up to its present pitch of delicacy and smoothness; and we admit that he had a melody in his thoughts which they dared not disobey. That he is, as has been alleged by a chief critic, "our first metrical writer," lies not in our creed; and even Turberville's more measured praise,—

Our mother tongue by him hath got such lyght,
That ruder speche thereby is banisht qwyht,—

we have difficulty in accepting. We venture to be of opinion that he did not belong to that order of master-minds, with whom transitions originate, although qualified, by the quickness of a yielding grace, to assist effectually a transitional movement. There are names which catch the proverbs of praise as a hedge-thorn catches sheep's wool, by position and approximation rather than adaptitude: and this name is of them.

Yet it is a high name. His poetry makes the ear lean to it, it is so sweet and low; the English he made it of, being ready to be sweet, and falling ripe in sweetness into other hands than his. For the poems of his friend, Sir Thomas Wyatt, have more thought, freedom and variety, more general earnestness, more of the attributes of masterdom, than Lord Surrey's; while it were vain to reproach for lack of melody the writer of that loveliest lyric, "My lute, be still." And Wyatt is various in metres, and the first song-writer (that praise we must secure to him) of his generation. For the rest, there is an inequality in the structure of his verses which is very striking and observable in Surrey himself: as if the language, consciously insecure in her position, were balancing her accentual being and the forms of her pronunciation, half giddily, on the very turning point of transition. Take from Wyatt such a stanza as this, for instance,—

> The long love that in my thoughts I harbour,
> And in my heart doth keep his residence,
> Into my face presseth with bold pretence,
> And there campeth, displaying his banner.

and oppose to it the next example, polished as Pope,—

> But I am here in Kent and Christendom,
> Among the Muses where I read and rhyme;
> Where, if thou list, mine own John Poins, to come,
> Thou shalt be judge how I do spend my time.

It is well to mark Wyatt as a leader in the art of didactic poetic composition under the epistolary form, "sternly milde" (as Surrey said of his countenance) in the leaning toward satire. It is very well to mark many of his songs as of exceeding beauty, and as preserving clear their touching simplicity from that plague of over-curious conceits which infest his writings generally. That was the plague of Italian literature transmitted by contagion, together with better things—together with the love of love-lore, and the sonnet structure, the summer-bower for one fair thought, delighted in and naturalized in England by Wyatt and Surrey. For the latter,—

"From Tuscane came his ladye's worthy race:

and his Muse as well as Geraldine. Drops from Plato's cup, passing through Petrarch's, not merely perfumed and coloured but diluted by the medium, we find in Surrey's cup also. We must not underpraise Surrey to balance the overpraise we murmur at. Denying him supremacy as a reformer, the denial of his poetic nobleness is far from us. We attribute to him the chivalry of the *light* ages; we call him a scholastic troubadour. The longest and most beautiful of his poems ("describing the lover's whole state") was a memory in the mind of Milton when he wrote his Allegro. He has that measure of pathos whose expression is no gesture of passion, but the skilful fingering on a well-tuned lute. He affects us at worst not painfully, and

With easie sighs such as folks draw in love.

He wrote the first English blank verse, in his translation of two books of the Æneid. He leads, in seeming, to the ear of the world, and by predestination of "popular breath," that little choral swan-chant which, swelled by Wyatt, Vaux, Bryan, and others, brake the common air in the days of the eighth Henry. And he fulfilled in sorrow his awarded fate as a poet, his sun going down at noon —and the cleft head, with its fair youthful curls, testifying like that fabled head of Orpheus, to the music of the living tongue.

Sackville, Lord Dorset, takes up the new blank verse from the lips of Surrey, and turns it to its right use of tragedy. We cannot say that he does for it much more. His 'Gorboduc,' with some twenty years between it and Shakespeare, is farther from the true drama in versification and all the rest, than 'Gammer Gurton' is from 'Gorboduc.' Sackville's blank verse, like Lord Surrey's before him, is only heroic verse without rhyme: and we must say so in relation to Gascoigne, who wrote the second blank verse tragedy, the 'Jocasta,' and the first blank verse original poem, 'The Stele Glass.' The secret of the blank verse of Shakespeare, and Fletcher, and Milton, did not dwell with them: the arched cadence, with its artistic key-stone and underflood of broad continuous sound, was never achieved nor attempted by its first builders. We sometimes

whisper in our silence that Marlowe's "brave sublunary" instincts should have groped that way. But no! Chaucer had more sense of music in the pause than Marlowe had. Marlowe's rhythm is not, indeed, hard and stiff and uniform, like the sentences of 'Gorboduc,' as if the pattern-one had been cut in boxwood: there is a difference between uniformity and monotony, and he found it; his cadence revolves like a wheel, progressively if slowly and heavily, and with an orbicular grandeur of unbroken and unvaried music.

It remains to us to speak of the work by which Sackville is better known than by 'Gorboduc,'—the 'Mirror for Magistrates.' The design of it has been strangely praised, seeing that whatever that peculiar merit were, Lydgate's 'Fall of Princes' certainly cast the shadow before. But Sackville's commencement of the execution proved the master's hand; and that the great canvas fell abandoned to the blurring brushes of inadequate disciples, was an ill-fortune compensated adequately by the honour attributed to the Induction —of inducing a nobler genius than his own, even Spenser's, to a nobler labour. We cannot doubt the influence of that Induction. Its colossal figures, in high allegorical relief, were exactly adapted to impress the outspread fancy of the most sensitive of poets. A yew-tree cannot stand at noon in an open pleasaunce without throwing the outline of its branches on the broad and sunny grass. Still, admitting the suggestion in its fulness, nothing can differ more

than the allegorical results of the several geniuses of Lord Dorset and Spenser. Tear-drop and dew-drop respond more similarly to analysis; or morbid grief and ideal joy. Sackville stands close wrapt in the "blanket of his dark," and will not drop his mantle for the sun. Spenser's business is with the lights of the world, and the lights beyond the world.

But this Sackville, this Earl of Dorset, ("Oh, a fair earl was he!") stands too low for admeasurement with Spenser: and we must look back, if covetous of comparisons, to some one of a loftier and more kingly stature. We must look back far, and stop at Chaucer. Spenser and Chaucer do naturally remind us of each other, they two being the most cheerful-hearted of the poets—with whom cheerfulness, as an attribute of poetry, is scarcely a common gift. But the world will be upon us! The world moralizes of late and in its fashion, upon the immorality of mournful poems, upon the criminality of "melodious tears," upon the morbidness of the sorrows of poets, —because Lord Byron was morbidly sorrowful, and because a crowd of his ephemeral imitators hung their heads all on one side and were insincerely sorrowful. The fact, however, has been, apart from Lord Byron and his disciples, that the "αι αι" of Apollo's flower is vocally sad in the prevailing majority of poetical compositions. The philosophy is, perhaps, that the poetic temperament, halfway between the light of the ideal and the darkness of the

real, and rendered by each more sensitive to the other, and unable, without a struggle, to pass out clear and calm into either, bears the impress of the necessary conflict in dust and blood. The philosophy may be, that only the stronger spirits do accomplish this victory, having lordship over their own genius; whether they accomplish it by looking bravely to the good ends of evil things, which is the practical ideal, and possible to all men in a measure—or by abstracting the inward sense from sensual things and their influences, which is subjectivity perfected—or by glorifying sensual things with the inward sense, which is objectivity transfigured—or by attaining to the highest vision of the idealist, which is subjectivity turned outward into an actual objectivity.

To the last triumph, Shakespeare attained; but Chaucer and Spenser fulfilled their destiny and grew to their mutual likeness as cheerful poets, by certain of the former processes. They two are alike in their cheerfulness, yet are their cheerfulnesses most unlike. Each poet laughs: yet their laughters ring with as far a difference as the sheep-bell on the hill and the joy-bell in the city. Each is earnest in his gladness: each active in persuading you of it. You are persuaded, and hold each for a cheerful man. The whole difference is, that Chaucer has a cheerful humanity: Spenser, a cheerful ideality. One, rejoices walking on the sunny side of the street: the other, walking out of the street in a way of his own, kept

green by a blessed vision. One, uses the adroitness of his fancy by distilling out of the visible universe her occult smiles: the other, by fleeing beyond the possible frown, the occasions of natural ills, to that "cave of cloud" where he may smile safely to himself. One, holds festival with men—seldom so coarse and loud indeed, as to startle the deer from their green covert at Woodstock—or with homely Nature and her "douce marguerite" low in the grasses: the other adopts, for his playfellows, imaginary or spiritual existences, and will not say a word to Nature herself, unless it please her to dress for his masque and speak daintily sweet and rare like a spirit. The human heart of one utters oracles; the imagination of the other speaks for his heart, and we miss no prophecy. For music, we praised Chaucer's, and not only as Dryden did, for "a Scotch tune." But never issued there from lip or instrument, or the tuned causes of nature, more lovely sound than we gather from our Spenser's Art. His mouth is vowed away from the very possibilities of harshness. Right leans to wrong in its excess. His rhythm is the continuity of melody, not harmony, because too smooth for modulation—because "by his vow" he dares not touch a discord for the sake of consummating a harmony. It is the singing of an angel in a dream: it has not enough of contrary for waking music. Of his great poem we may say, that we miss no humanity in it, because we make a new humanity

out of it and are satisfied in our human hearts—as new humanity vivified by the poet's life, moving in happy measure to the chanting of his thoughts, and upon ground supernaturally beautified by his sense of the beautiful. As an allegory, it enchants us away from its own purposes. Una is Una to us; and Sans Foy is a traitor, and Errour is "an ugly monster," with a "tayle;" and we thank nobody in the world, not even Spenser, for trying to prove it otherwise. Do we dispraise an allegorical poem by throwing off its allegory? we trow not. Probably, certainly to our impression, the highest triumph of an allegory, from this of the 'Faery Queen' down to the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' is the abnegation of itself.

Oh those days of Elizabeth! We call them the days of Elizabeth, but the glory fell over the ridge, in illumination of the half-century beyond: those days of Elizabeth! Full were they of poets as the summer-days are of birds,—

> No branch on which a fine bird did not sit,
> No bird but his sweet song did shrilly sing,
> No song but did contayne a lovely dit.

We hear of the dramatists, and shall speak of them presently; but the lyric singers were yet more numerous,—there were singers in every class. Never since the first nightingale brake voice in Eden, arose such a jubilee-concert: never before nor since has such a crowd of true poets uttered true poetic speech in one day. Not in England evermore! Not in Greece,

that we know. Not in Rome, by what we know. Talk of their Augustan era—we will not talk of it, lest we desecrate our own of Elizabeth. The latter was rightly prefigured by our figure of the chorus of swans. It was besides the milky way of poetry: it was the miracle-age of poetical history. We may fancy that the master-souls of Shakespeare and Spenser, breathing, stirring in divine emotion, shot vibratory life through other souls in electric association: we may hear in fancy, one wind moving every leaf in a forest—one voice responded to by a thousand rock-echoes. Why, a common man walking through the earth in those days, grew a poet by position—even as a child's shadow cast upon a mountain slope is dilated to the aspect of a giant's.

If we, for our own parts, did enact a Briareus, we might count these poets on the fingers of our hundred hands, after the fashion of the poets of Queen Anne's time, counting their syllables. We do not talk of them as "faultless monsters," however wonderful in the multitude and verity of their gifts: their faults were numerous, too. Many poets of an excellent sweetness, thinking of poetry that, like love,

> It was to be all made of fantasy,—

fell poetry-sick, as they might fall love-sick, and knotted associations, far and free enough to girdle the earth withal, into true love-knots of quaintest devices. Many poets affected novelty rather than truth;

and many attained to novelty rather by attitude than altitude, whether of thought or word. Worst of all, many were incompetent to Sir Philip Sidney's ordeal —the translation of their verses into prose—and would have perished utterly by that hot ploughshare. Still, the natural healthy eye turns toward the light, and the true calling of criticism remains the distinguishing of beauty. Love and honour to the poets of Elizabeth—honour and love to them all! Honour even to the fellow workers with Sackville in the 'Mirror for Magistrates,' to Ferrers, Churchyard and others, who had their hand upon the ore if they did not clasp it! and to Warner, the poet of Albion's England, singing snatches of ballad-pathos, while he worked for the most part heavily, too, with a bowed back as at a stiff soil—and to Gascoigne, reflecting beauty and light from his 'Stele Glass,' though his 'Fruites of War' are scarcely fruits from Parnassus —and to Daniel, tender and noble, and teaching, in his 'Musophilus,' the chivalry of poets, though in his 'Civil Wars,' somewhat too historical, as Drayton has written of him—and to Drayton, generous in the 'Polyolbion' of his poet-blessing on every hill and river through this fair England, and not ineloquent in his Heroical Epistles, though somewhat tame and level in his 'Barons' Wars'—and to the two brother Fletchers, Giles and Phineas, authors of 'Christ's Victory' and 'The Purple Island,' for whom the Muse's kiss followed close upon the mother's, gifting their

lips with no vulgar music and their house with that noble kinsman, Fletcher the dramatist! Honour, too, to Davies, who "reasoned in verse" with a strong mind and strong enunciation, though he wrote one poem on the Soul and another on Dancing, and concentrated the diverging rays of intellect and folly in his sonnets on the reigning Astræa—and to Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, who had deep thoughts enough to accomplish ten poets of these degenerate days, though because of some obscurity in their expression you would find some twenty critics "full of oaths" by the pyramids, that they all meant nought—and to Chamberlayne, picturesque, imaginative, earnest (by no means dramatic) in his poetic romance of 'Pharonnida,' though accumulative to excess of figures, and pedantic in such verbal learning as "entheon charms," the "catagraph" of a picture, the "exagitations and congestions of elements," *et sic omnia!*—to Chalkhill, wrapt, even bound, "in soft Lydian airs," till himself, as well as his Clearchus and Thealma, fall asleep in involutions of harmony—and to Browne, something languid in his 'Britannia's Pastorals,' by sitting in the sun with Guarini and Marini, and "perplext in the extreme" by a thousand images and sounds of beauty calling him across the dewy fields—and to Wither, author of the 'Shepherd's Hunting,' and how much else?—Wither, who wrote of poetry like a poet, and in return has been dishonoured and misprised by some of his own kind—a true sincere poet

of blessed oracles. Honour, love and praise to him and all! May pardon come to us from the unnamed.

Honour also to the translators of poems—to such as Chapman and Sylvester—great hearts, interpreters of great hearts, and afterwards worthily thanked by the Miltons, and Popes, and Keats's, for their gift of greatness to the language of their England.

Honour to the satirists! to Marston, who struck boldly and coarsely at an offence from the same level with the offender—to Hall, preserving his own elevation, and flashing downwardly those thick lightnings in which we smell the sulphur—and to Donne, whose instinct to beauty overcame the resolution of his satiric humour.

Honour, again, to the singers of brief poems, to the lyrists and sonneteers! O Shakespeare, let thy name rest gently among them, perfuming the place. We "swear" that these sonnets and songs do verily breathe, "not of themselves, but *thee*;" and we recognize and bless them as short sighs from thy large poetic heart, burdened with diviner inspiration! O rare Ben Jonson, let us have thy songs, rounded each with a spherical thought, and the lyrics from thy masques alive with learned fantasy, and thine epigrams keen and quaint, and thy noble epitaphs, under which the dead seem stirring! Fletcher, thou shalt be with us—prophet of Comus and Penseroso! giddy with inhalation from the fount of the beautiful, speaking out wildly thought upon thought, measure

upon measure, as the bird sings, because his own voice is lovely to him. Sidney, true knight and fantastic poet, whose soul did too curiously inquire the fashion of the beautiful—the fashion rather than the secret,—but left us in one line, the completest 'Ars Poetica' extant,—

"Foole, sayde my Muse to mee, looke in thine heart,
and write,—"

thy name be famous in all England and Arcadia! And Raleigh, tender and strong, of voice sweet enough to answer that 'Passionate Shepherd,' yet trumpet-shrill to speak the "Soul's errand" thrilling the depths of our own! having honour and suffering as became a poet, from the foot of the Lady of England light upon his cloak, to the cloak of his executioner wrapping redly his breathless corpse. Marlowe,—we must not forget his 'Shepherd' in his tragedies: and 'Come live with me' sounds passionately still through the dead cold centuries. And Drummond, the over-praised and under-praised,—a passive poet, if we may use the phraseology—who was not careful to achieve greatness, but whose natural pulses beat music, and with whom the consciousness of life was the sentiment of beauty. And Lyly, shriven from the sins of his Euphues, with a quaint grace in his songs; and Donne, who takes his place naturally in this new class, having a dumb angel, and knowing more noble poetry than he articulates. Herrick, the Ariel of

poets, sucking "where the bee sucks" from the rose-heart of nature, and reproducing the fragrance idealized; and Carew, using all such fragrance as a courtly essence, with less of self-abandonment and more of artificial application; and Herbert, with his face as the face of a spirit, dimly bright; and fantastic Quarles, in rude and graphic gesticulation, expounding verity and glory; and Breton, and Turberville, and Lodge, and Hall (not the satirist), and all the hundred swans, nameless or too numerous to be named, of that Cayster of the rolling time.

Then, high in the miraculous climax, come the dramatists—from whose sinews was knit the overcoming strength of our literature over all the nations of the world. "The drama is the executive of literature," said De Staël: and the Greek's "action, action, action," we shall not miss in our drama. Honour to the dramatists, as honour from them!

We must take a few steps backward for position's sake, and then be satisfied with a rapid glance at the Drama. From the days of Norman William, the representations called Mysteries and Moralities had come and gone without a visible poet; and Skelton appears before us almost the first English claimant of a dramatic reputation, with the authorship of the interludes of 'Magnificence' and the 'Nigromansir.' The latter is chiefly famous for Warton's affirmation of having held it in his hands, giving courteous occasion to Ritson's denial of its existence: and our own

palms having never been crossed by the silver of either, we cannot prophesy on the degree of individual honour involved in the literary claim. Bale, one of the eighth Henry's bishops, was an active composer of Moralities; and John Heywood, his royal jester and "author of that very merry interlude" called *The Four P's*, united in his merriment that caustic sense with that lively ease, which have not been too common since in his accomplished dramatic posterity. Yet those who in the bewilderment of their admirations (or senses) attribute to John Heywood the 'Pinner of Wakefield,' are more obviously—we are sorely tempted to add more ridiculously—wrong, than those who attribute it to Shakespeare. The Canon of Windsor's 'Ralph Royster Doyster,' and the Bishop of Bath and Wells's 'Gammer Gurton,' followed each other close into light, the earliest modern comedies, by the force of the "*âme ecclésiastique*." A little after came Ferrys, memorialized by Puttenham as "the principall man of his profession" (of poetry), and "of no lesse myrthe and felicitie than John Heywood, but of much more skille and magnificence in his meter." But seeing that even Oblivion forgot Ferrys, leaving his name and Puttenham's praise when she defaced his works, and seeing, too, the broad farcedom of the earlier, however episcopal writers, we find ourselves in an unwilling posture of recognition before Edwards, as the first extant regular dramatist of England. It is a pitiful beginning. *The*

Four P's would be a more welcome A to us. They express more power with their inarticulate roughness than does this Damon and Pythias, with its rhymed, loitering frigidity, or even than this Palamon and Arcite, in which the sound of the hunting horn cast into ecstasy the too gracious soul of Queen Elizabeth. But Sir John Davies's divine Astræa was, at that grey dawn of her day, ignorant of greater poets; and we ("happy in this") go on toward them. After Edwards, behold Sackville with that 'Gorboduc' we have named, the first blank verse tragedy we can name, praised by Sidney for its exemplary preservation of the unities and for "climbing to the height of Seneca his stile,"—tight-fitting praise, considering that the composition is high enough to account for its snow, and cold enough to emulate the Roman's. And after Sackville, behold the first dramatic geniuses, in juxtaposition with the first dramatists—Peele, and Kyd, mad as his own Hieronimo, (we will grant it to such critics as are too utterly in their senses,) only—

> When he is mad,
> Then, methinks, he is a brave fellow!

and then, methinks, and by such madness, the possibility of a Shakespeare was revealed. Kyd's blank verse is probably the first breaking of the true soil; and certainly far better and more dramatic than Marlowe's is,—crowned poet as the latter stands before

us—poet of the English Faustus, which we will not talk of against the German, nor set up its grand, luxurious, melancholy devil against Goethe's subtle, biting, Voltairish devil, each being devil after its kind,—the poet of the Jew which Shakespeare drew (not), yet a true Jew "with a berde,"—and the poet of the first historical drama,—since the 'Gorboduc' scarcely can be called one. Marlowe was more essentially a poet than a dramatist; and if the remark appear self-evident and universally applicable, we will take its reverse in Kyd, who was more essentially, with all his dramatic faults, a dramatist than a poet. Passing from the sound of the elemental monotonies of the rhythm of Marlowe, we cannot pause before Nash and Greene, to distinguish their characteristics. It is enough to name these names of gifted dramatists, who lived, or at least wrote, rather before Shakespeare than with him, and helped to make him credible. Through them, like a lens, we behold his light. Of them we conjecture—these are the blind elements working before the earthquake,—before the great "Shakescene," as Greene said when he was cross. And we may say when we are fanciful, these are the experiments of Nature, made in her solution of the problem of how much deathless poetry will agree with how much mortal clay—these are the potsherd vessels half filled, and failing at last,—until up to the edge of *one*, the liquid inspiration rose and bubbled in hot beads to quench the thirsty lips of the world.

It is hard to speak of Shakespeare; these measures of the statures of common poets fall from our hands when we seek to measure him: it is harder to praise him. Like the tall plane-tree which Xerxes found standing in the midst of an open country, and honoured inappropriately with his "barbaric pomp," with bracelets and chains and rings suspended on its branches, so has it been with Shakespeare. A thousand critics have commended him with praises as unsuitable as a gold ring to a plane-tree. A thousand hearts have gone out to him, carrying necklaces. Some have discovered that he individualized, and some that he generalized, and some that he subtilized —almost *trans*-transcendentally. Some would have it that he was a wild genius, sowing wild oats and stealing deer to the end, with no more judgment forsooth than "youth the hare;" and some, that his very pulses beat by that critical law of art in which he was blameless:—some, that all his study was in his horn-book, and not much of that; and some, that he was as learned a polyglott as ever had been dull but for Babel:—some, that his own ideal burned steadfastly within his own fixed contemplations, unstirred by breath from without; and some, that he wrote for the gold on his palm and the "rank popular breath" in his nostrils, apart from consciousness of greatness and desire of remembrance. If the opinions prove nothing, their contradictions prove the exaltation of the object; their contradictions

are praise. For men differ about things above their reach, not within it;—about the mountains in the moon, not Primrose Hill: and more than seven cities of men have differed in their talk about Homer also. Homer, also, was convicted of indiscreet nodding; and Homer, also, had no manner of judgment, and the Ars Poetica people could not abide his bad taste. And we find another analogy. We, who have no leaning to the popular cant of Romanticism and Classicism, and believe the old Greek BEAUTY to be both new and old, and as alive and not more grey in Webster's 'Duchess of Malfy' than in Æschylus's 'Eumenides,' do reverence this Homer and this Shakespeare as the colossal borderers of the two intellectual departments of the world's age,—do behold from their feet the antique and modern literatures sweep outwardly away, and conclude, that whereas the Greek bore in his depth the seed and prophecy of all the Hellenic and Roman poets, so did Shakespeare "whose seed was in himself" also, those of a later generation.

For the rest we must speak briefly of Shakespeare, and very weakly too, except for love. That he was a great natural genius nobody, we believe, has doubted —the fact has passed with the cheer of mankind; but that he was a great artist the majority has doubted. Yet Nature and Art cannot be reasoned apart into antagonistic principles. Nature is God's art—the accomplishment of a spiritual significance hidden in

a sensible symbol. Poetic art (man's) looks past the symbol with a divine guess and reach of soul into the mystery of the significance,—disclosing from the analysis of the visible things, the synthesis or unity of the ideal,—and expounds like symbol and like significance out of the infinite of God's doing into the finite of man's comprehending. Art lives by Nature, and not the bare mimetic life generally attributed to Art: she does not imitate, she expounds. *Interpres naturæ*—is the poet-artist; and the poet wisest in nature is the most artistic poet: and thus our Shakespeare passes to the presidency unquestioned, as the greatest artist in the world. We believe in his judgment as in his genius. We believe in his learning, both of books and men, and hills and valleys: in his grammars and dictionaries we do not believe. In his philosophy of language we believe absolutely: in his Babel-learning, not at all. We believe reverently in the miracle of his variety; and it is observable that we become aware of it less by the numerousness of his persons and their positions, than by the *depth* of the least of either,—by the sense of visibility beyond what we see, as in nature. Our creed goes on to declare him most passionate and most rational—of an emotion which casts us into thought, of a reason which leaves us open to emotion: most grave and most gay—while we scarcely can guess that the man Shakespeare is grave or gay, because he interposes between ourselves and his personality the whole

breadth and length of his ideality. His associative faculty,—the wit's faculty besides the poet's—for him who was both wit and poet, shed sparks like an electric wire. He was wise in the world, having studied it in his heart; what is called "the knowledge of the world" being just the knowledge of one heart, and certain exterior symbols. What else? What otherwise could he, the young transgressor of Sir Thomas Lucy's fences, new from Stratford and the Avon, close in theatric London, have seen or touched or handled of the Hamlets and Lears and Othellos, that he should draw them? "How can I take portraits," said Marmontel, in a similar inexperience, "before I have beheld faces?" Voltaire embraced him, in reply. Well applauded, Voltaire! It was a *mot* for Marmontel's utterance, and Voltaire's praise—for Marmontel, not for Shakespeare. Every being is his own centre to the universe, and in himself must one foot of the compasses be fixed to attain to any measurement: nay, every being is his own mirror to the universe. Shakespeare wrote from within—the beautiful; and we recognize from within—the true. He is universal, because he is individual. And without any prejudice of admiration, we may go on to account his faults to be the proofs of his power; the cloud of dust cast up by the multitude of the chariots. The activity of his associative faculty is occasionally morbid: in the abundance of his winged thoughts, the locust flies with the bee, and the ground

is dark with the shadow of them. Take faults, take excellences, it is impossible to characterize this Shakespeare by an epithet: have we heard the remark before, that it should sound so obvious? We say of Corneille, the noble; of Racine, the tender; of Æschylus, the terrible; of Sophocles, the perfect; but not one of these words, not one appropriately descriptive epithet, can we attach to Shakespeare without a conscious recoil. Shakespeare! the name is the description.

He is the most wonderful artist in blank verse of all in England, and almost the earliest. We do not say that he first broke the enchaining monotony, of which the Sackvilles and the Marlowes left us complaining; because the versification of 'Hieronimo' ran at its own strong will, and the 'Pinner of Wakefield' may have preceded his first plays. We do not even say what we might, that his hand first proved the compass and infinite modulation of the new instrument; but we do say, that it never answered another hand as it answered his. We do say, this fingering was never learned of himself by another. From Massinger's more resonant majesty, from even Fletcher's more numerous and artful cadences, we turn back to his artlessness of art, to his singular and supreme estate as a versificator. Often when he is at the sweetest, his words are poor monosyllables, his pauses frequent to brokenness, and the structure of the several lines less varied than was taught after

Fletcher's masterdom; but the whole results in an ineffable charming of the ear which we acquiesce in without seeking its cause, a happy mystery of music.

This is little for Shakespeare; yet so much for the place, that we are forced into brevities for our observations which succeed. We chronicle only the names of Chapman, Dekker, Webster, Tourneur, Randolph, Middleton, and Thomas Heywood, although great names, and worthy, it is not too much to add, of Shakespeare's brotherhood. Many besides lean from our memory to the paper, but we put them away reverently. It was the age of the dramatists—the age of strong passionate men, scattering on every side their good and evil oracles of vehement humanity, and extenuating no thought in its word: and in that age, "to write like a man," was a deed accomplished by many besides him of whom it was spoken, Jonson's "son Cartwright."

At Jonson's name we stop perforce, and do salutation in the dust to the impress of that "learned sock." He was a learned man, as everybody knows; and as everybody does not believe, not the worse for his learning. His material, brought laboriously from East and West, is wrapt in a flame of his own. If the elasticity and abandonment of Shakespeare and of certain of Shakespeare's brothers, are not found in his writings, the reason of the defects need not be sought out in his readings. His genius, high and verdant as it grew, yet belonged to the hard woods:

it was lance-wood rather than bow-wood—a genius rather noble than graceful—eloquent, with a certain severity and emphasis of enunciation. It would have been the same if he, too, had known "little Latin and sse Greek." There was a dash of the rhetorical in his dramatic. Not that we deny him empire over the passions: his heart had rhetoric as well as his understanding, and he wrote us a 'Sad Shepherd,' as well as a 'Catiline.' His versification heaves heavily with thought. For his comic powers, let 'Volpone' and 'The Alchymist' attest them with that unextinguishable laughter which is the laughter of gods or poets still more than of the wits' coffee-house. Was it "done at the Mermaid," was it ever fancied there, that "rare Ben Jonson" should be called a pedantic poet? Nay, but only a scholastic one.

And Beaumont and Fletcher, the Castor and Pollux of this starry poetic sphere, (*lucida sidera,*) our silence shall not cover them; nor will we put asunder, in our speech, the names which friendship and poetry joined together, nor distinguish, by a laboured analysis, the vivacity of one from the solidity of the other; seeing that men who, according to tradition, lived in one house, and wore one cloak, and wrote on one page, may well, by the sanctity of that one grave they have also in common, maintain for ever beyond it the unity they coveted. The characteristics of these writers stand out in a softened light from the deep tragic background of the times. We may liken

them to Shakespeare in one mood of his mind, because there are few classes of beauty, the type or likeness of which is not discoverable in Shakespeare. From the rest, they stand out contrastingly, as the Apollo of the later Greek sculpture-school,—too graceful for divinity and too vivacious for marble,—placed in a company of the antiquer statues with their grand blind look of the almightiness of repose. We cannot say of these poets as of the rest, "they write all like men;" we cannot think they write like women either: perhaps they write a little like centaurs. We are of opinion in any way, that the grace is more obvious than the strength; and there may be something centauresque and of twofold nature in their rushing mutabilities, and changes on passion and weakness. Clearest of all is that they wrote like poets, and in a versification most surpassingly musical though liberal, as if music served them for love's sake, unbound. They had an excellent genius, but not a strong enough invention to include judgment; judgment being the consistency of invention, and consistency always, whether in morals or literature, depending upon strength. We do not, in fact, find in them any perfect and covenanted whole—we do not find it in character, or in plot, or in composition; and lamenting the defect on many grounds we do so on this chief one, that their good is just good, their evil just evil, unredeemed into good like Shakespeare's and Nature's evil by unity of design, but lying apart, a willingly

chosen, through and through evil—and "by this time it stinketh." If other results are less lamentable, they are no less fatal. The mirror which these poets held up to us is vexed with a thousand cracks, and everything visible is in fragments. Their conceptions all tremble on a peradventure—"peradventure they shall do well:" there is no royal absolute will that they should do well: the poets are less kings than workmen. And being workmen they are weak—the moulds fall from their hands—are clutched with a spasm or fall with a faintness. After which querulousness, we shall leave the question as to whether their tragic or comic powers be put to more exquisite use,—not for solution, nor for doubt (since we hold fast an opinion), but for praise the most rarely appropriate or possible.

One passing word of Ford, the pathetic—for he may wear on his sleeve the epithet of Euripides, and no daw peck there. Most tender is he, yet not to feebleness—most mournful, yet not to languor; yet we like to hear the war-horse leaps of Dekker on the same tragic ground with him, producing at once contrast and completeness. Ungrateful thought! the 'Witch of Edmonton' bewitched us to it. Ford can fill the ear and soul singly, with the trumpet-note of his pathos; and in its pauses you shall hear the murmuring voices of nature,—such a nightingale, for instance, as never sang on a common night. Then that death scene in the 'Broken Heart!' who has equalled

that? It is single in the drama,—the tragic of tragedy, and the sublime of grief. A word, too, of Massinger, who writes all like a giant—a dry-eyed giant. He is too ostentatiously strong for flexibility, and too heavy for rapidity, and monotonous through his perpetual final trochee; his gesture and enunciation are slow and majestic. And another word of Shirley, an inferior writer, though touched, to our fancy, with something of a finer ray, and closing, in worthy purple, the procession of the Elizabethan men. Shirley is the last dramatist. *Valete et plaudite, o posteri.*

Standing in his traces, and looking backward and before, we become aware of the distinct demarcations of five eras of English poetry: the first, the Chaucerian, although we might call it *Chaucer;* the second, the Elizabethan; the third, which culminates in Cowley; the fourth, in Dryden and the French school; the fifth, the return to nature in Cowper and his successors of our day. These five rings mark the age of the fair and stingless serpent we are impelled, like the ancient mariner, to bless—but not "unaware." "*Ah benedicite!*" we bless her so, out of our Chaucer's rubric, softly, but with a plaintiveness of pleasure. For when the last echo of the Elizabethan harmonies had died away with Shirley's footsteps, in the twilight of that golden day; when Habington and Lovelace, and every last bird before nightfall was dumb, and Crashaw's fine rapture, holy as a summer sense of silence, left us to the stars—the first voices startling

the thinker from his reverting thoughts, are verily of another spirit. The voices are eloquent enough, thoughtful enough, fanciful enough; but something is defective. Can any one suffer, as an experimental reader, the transition between the second and third periods, without feeling that something is defective? What is so? And who dares to guess that it may be INSPIRATION?

"Poetry is of too spiritual a nature," Mr. Campbell has observed, "to admit of its authors being exactly grouped by a Linnæan system of classification." Nevertheless, from those subtle influences which poets render and receive, and from other causes less obvious but no less operative, it has resulted even to ourselves in this slight survey of the poets of our country, that the signs used by us simply as signs of historical demarcation, have naturally fallen or risen into signs of poetical classification. The five eras we spoke of just now, have indeed each a characteristic as clear in poetry as in chronology; and a deeper gulf than an *Anno Domini* yawns betwixt an Elizabethan man and a man of that third era upon which we are entering. The change of the poetical characteristic was not, indeed, without gradation. The hands of the clock had been moving silently for a whole hour before the new one struck; and even in Davies, even in Drayton, we felt the cold foreshadow of a change. The word "sweetness," which presses into our sentences against the will of our rhetoric whenever we speak of Shakespeare ("sweetest Shakespeare") or his kin, we lose

the taste of in the later waters; they are brackish with another age.

In what did the change consist? Practically and partially in the idol-worship of *rhyme*. Among the elder poets, the rhyme was only a felicitous adjunct, a musical accompaniment, the tinkling of a cymbal through the choral harmonies. You heard it across the changes of the pause, as an undertone of the chant, marking the time with an audible indistinctness, and catching occasionally and reflecting the full light of the emphasis of the sense in mutual elucidation. But the new practice endeavoured to identify in all possible cases the rhyme and what may be called the sentimental emphasis; securing the latter to the tenth rhyming *syllable*, and so dishonouring the emphasis of the sentiment into the base use of the marking of the time. And not only by this unnatural provision did the emphasis minister to the rhyme, but the pause did it also. "Away with all pauses,"—said the reformers,—"except the legitimate pause at the tenth rhyming syllable. O rhyme, live for ever! Rhyme alone take the incense from our altars,—tinkling cymbal alone be our music!"—And so arose, in dread insignificance, the Heart-and-impart men.

Moreover, the corruption of the versification was but a type of the change in the poetry itself, and sufficiently expressive. The accession to the throne of the poets, of the *wits* in the new current sense of the term, or of the beaux esprits—a term to be used the

more readily because descriptive of the actual pestilential influence of French literature—was accompanied by the substitution of elegant thoughts for poetic conceptions ("elegant" alas! beginning to be the critical pass-word), of adroit illustrations for beautiful images, of ingenuity for genius. Yet this third era is only the preparation for the fourth consummating one—the hesitation before the crime: we smell the blood through it in the bath-room. And our fancy grows hysterical, like poor Octavia, while the dismal extent of the "quantum mutatus" developes itself in detail.

"Waller's sweetness!" it is a needy antithesis to Denham's strength,—and, if anything beside, a sweetness as far removed from that which we have lately recognized, as the saccharine of the palate from the melodious of the ear. Will Saccharissa frown at our comparison from the high sphere of his verse? or will she, a happy "lady who can sleep when she pleases," please to oversleep our offence? It is certain that we but walk in her footsteps in our disdain of her poet, even if we disdain him—and most seriously we disown any such partaking of her "crueltie." Escaping from the first astonishment of an unhappy transition, and from what is still more vexing, those "base, common, and popular" critical voices, which, in and out of various "arts of poetry," have been pleased to fix upon this same transitional epoch as the genesis of excellence to our language and versi-

fication, we do not, we hope it of ourselves, undervalue Waller. There is a certain grace "beyond the reach of art," or rather beyond the destructive reach of his ideas of art, to which, we opine, if he had not been a courtier and a renegade, the Lady Dorothea might have bent her courtly head unabashed, even as the Penshurst beeches did. We gladly acknowledge in him, as in Denham and other poets of the transition, an occasional remorseful recurrence by half lines and whole lines, or even a few lines together, to the poetic Past. We will do anything but agree with Mr. Hallam, who, in his excellent and learned work on the Literature of Europe, has passed some singular judgments upon the poets, and none more startling than his comparison of Waller to Milton, on the ground of the sustenance of power. The crying truth is louder than Mr. Hallam, and cries, in Spite of Fame, with whom poor Waller was an "enfant trouvé," an heir by chance, rather than merit,—that he is feeble poetically quite as surely as morally and politically, and that, so far from being an equal and sustained poet, he has not strength for unity even in his images, nor for continuity in his thoughts, nor for adequacy in his expression, nor for harmony in his versification. This is at least our strong and sustained impression of Edmund Waller.

With a less natural gift of poetry than Waller, Denham has not only more strength of purpose and language (an easy superiority), but some strength in

the abstract: he puts forth rather a sinewy hand to the new structure of English versification. It is true, indeed, that in his only poem which survives to any competent popularity—his 'Cooper's Hill'—we may find him again and again, by an instinct to a better principle, receding to the old habit of the medial pause, instead of the would-be sufficiency of the final one. But, generally, he is true to his modern sect of the Pharisees; and he helps their prosperity otherwise by adopting that pharisaic fashion of setting forth, vain-gloriously, a little virtue of thought and poetry in pointed and antithetic expression, which all the wits delighted in, from himself, a chief originator, to Pope, the perfecter. The famous lines, inheriting by entail a thousand critical admirations—

"Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full,"

and as Sydney Smith might put it, "a great many other things without a great many other things," contain the germ and prophecy of the whole Queen Anne's generation. For the rest, we will be brief in our melancholy, and say no more of Denham than that he was a Dryden *in small*.

The genius of the new school was its anomaly, even Abraham Cowley. We have said nothing of "the metaphysical poets" because we disclaim the classification, and believe with Mr. Leigh Hunt, that every poet, inasmuch as he is a poet, is a metaphysician. In taking note, therefore, of this Cowley, who

stands on the very vibratory soil of the transition, and stretches his faltering and protesting hands on either side to the old and to the new, let no one brand him for "metaphysics." He was a true poet, both by natural constitution and cultivation, but without the poet's heart. His admirers have compared him to Pindar; and, taking Pindar out of his rapture, they may do so still: he was a Pindar writing by *métier* rather than by *verve*. In rapidity and subtlety of the associate faculty, which, however, with him, moved circularly rather than onward, he was sufficiently Pindaric: but, as it is a fault in the Greek lyrist to leave his buoyancy to the tumultuous rush of his associations too unmisgivingly and entirely for the right reverence of Unity in Beauty,—so is it the crime of the English poet to commit coldly what the other permitted passively, and with a conscious volition, quick yet calm, calm when quickest, to command from the ends of the universe the associations of material sciences and spiritual philosophies. Quickness of the associative or suggestive faculty is common, we have had occasion to observe, to the wit (in the modern sense) and the poet; its application only, being of a reverse difference. Cowley confounded the application, and became a witty poet. The Elizabethan writers were inclined to a too curious illuminating of thought, by imagery. Cowley was coarsely curious: he went to the shambles for his chambers of imagery, and very often through the mud. All which faults appear to

us attributable to his coldness of temperament, and his defectiveness in the instinct towards Beauty; to having the intellect only of a great poet, not the sensibility. His 'Davideis,' our first epic in point of time, has fine things in it. His translations, or rather paraphrases of Anacreon, are absolutely the most perfect of any English composition of their order. His other poems contain profuse material, in image and reflection, for the accomplishment of three poets, each greater than himself. He approached the beautiful and the true as closely as mere Fancy could; but that very same Fancy, unfixed by feeling, too often, in the next breath, approximated him to the hideous and the false. Noble thoughts are in Cowley—we say noble, and we might say sublime; but, while we speak, he falls below the first praise. Yet his influence was for good rather than for evil, by inciting to a struggle backward, a delay in the revolutionary movement: and this, although a wide gulf yawned between him and the former age, and his heart's impulse was not strong enough to cast him across it. For his actual influence, he lifts us up and casts us down—charms, and goes nigh to disgust us—does all but make us love and weep.

And then came "glorious John," with the whole fourth era in his arms;—and eloquent above the sons of men, to talk down, thunder down poetry as if it were an exhalation. Do we speak as if he were not a poet? nay, but we speak of the character of his

influences; nay, but he was a poet—an excellent poet—in marble: and Phidias, with the sculpturesque ideal separated from his working tool, might have carved him. He was a poet without passion, just as Cowley was: but, then, Cowley lived by fancy, and that would have been poor living for John Dryden. Unlike Cowley, too, he had an earnestness which of itself was influential. He was inspired in his understanding and his senses only; but to the point of disenchanting the world most marvellously. He had a large soul for a man, containing sundry Queen Anne's men, one within another, like quartetto tables; but it was not a large soul for a poet, and it entertained the universe by potato-patches. He established finally the reign of the literati for the reign of the poets—and the critics clapped their hands. He established finally the despotism of the final emphasis—and no one dared, in affecting criticism, to speak any more at all against a tinkling cymbal. And so, in distinctive succession to poetry and inspiration, began the new system of harmony "as by law established;" and so he translated Virgil not only into English but into Dryden; and so he was kind enough to translate Chaucer too, as an example,—made him a much finer speaker, and not, according to our doxy, so good a versifier—and cured the readers of the old "Knight's tale" of sundry of their tears; and so he reasoned powerfully in verse—and threw into verse besides, the whole force of

his strong sensual being; and so he wrote what has been called from generation to generation, down to the threshold of our days, "the best ode in the English language." To complete which successes, he thrust out nature with a fork; and for a long time, and in spite of Horace's prophecy, she never came back again. Do we deny our gratitude and his glory to glorious John because we speak thus? In nowise would we do it. He was a man greatly endowed; and our language and our literature remain, in certain respects, the greater for his greatness—more practical, more rapid, and with an air of mixed freedom and adroitness which we welcome as an addition to the various powers of either. With regard to his influence—and he was most influential upon POETRY—we have spoken; and have the whole of the opening era from which to prove.

While we return upon our steps for a breathing moment, and pause before Milton,—the consideration occurs to us that a person of historical ignorance in respect to this divine poet, would hesitate and be at a loss to which era of our poetry to attach him through the internal evidence of his works. He has not the tread of a contemporary of Dryden; and Rochester's nothingness is a strange accompaniment to the voice of his greatness. Neither can it be quite predicated of him that he walks an Elizabethan man; there is a certain fine bloom or farina, rather felt than seen, upon the old poems, unrecognized upon his.

But the love of his genius leant backward to those olden oracles; and it is pleasant to think that he was actually born before Shakespeare's death; that they too looked upwardly to the same daylight and stars; and that he might have stretched his baby arms ("animosus infans") to the faint hazel eyes of the poet of poets. Let us think in anywise that he drew in some living subtle Shakespearian benediction, providing for greatness.

The Italian poets had "rained influence" on the Elizabethan "field of the cloth of gold;" and from the Italian poets as well as the classical sources and the elder English ones, did Milton accomplish his soul. Yet the poet Milton was not made by what he received; not even by what he loved. High above the current of poetical influences he held his own grand personality; and there never lived poet in any age (unless we assume ignorantly of Homer) more isolated in the contemporaneous world than he. He was not worked upon from out of it, nor did he work outwardly upon it. As Cromwell's secretary and Salmasius's antagonist, he had indeed an audience; but as a poet, a scant one; his music, like the spherical tune, being inaudible because too fine and high. It is almost awful to think of him issuing from the arena of controversy victorious and *blind*,—putting away from his dark brows the bloody laurel, left alone after the heat of the day by those for whom he had combated; and originating in that enforced dark

quietude his epic vision for the inward sight of the unborn; so to avenge himself on the world's neglect by exacting from it an eternal future of reminiscence. The circumstances of the production of his great work are worthy in majesty of the poem itself; and the writer is the ideal to us of the majestic personality of a poet. He is the student, the deep thinker, the patriot, the believer, the thorough brave man,—breathing freely for truth and freedom under the leaden weights of his adversities, never reproaching God for his griefs by his despair, working in the chain, praying without ceasing in the serenity of his sightless eyes; and, because the whole visible universe was swept away from betwixt them and the Creator, contemplating more intently the invisible infinite, and shaping all his thoughts to it in grander proportion. O noble Christian poet! Which is hardest? self-renunciation, and the sackcloth and the cave—or grief-renunciation, and the working on, on, under the stripe? He did what was hardest. He was Agonistes building up, instead of pulling down; and his high religious fortitude gave a character to his works. He stood in the midst of those whom we are forced to consider the corrupt versificators of his day, an iconoclast of their idol rhyme, and protesting practically against the sequestration of pauses. His lyrical poems, move they ever so softly, step loftily, and with something of an epic air. His sonnets are the first sonnets of a free rhythm—and this although

Shakespeare and Spenser were sonneteers. His 'Comus,' and 'Samson,' and 'Lycidas,'—how are we to praise them? His epic is the second to Homer's, and the first in sublime effects—a sense as of divine benediction flowing through it from end to end. Not that we compare, for a moment, Milton's genius with Homer's; but that Christianity is in the poem besides Milton. If we hazard a remark which is not admiration, it shall be this—that with all his heights and breadths (which we may measure geometrically if we please from the 'Davideis' of Cowley)—with all his rapt devotions and exaltations towards the highest of all, we do miss something (we, at least, who are writing, miss something) of what may be called, but rather metaphysically than theologically, *spirituality*. His spiritual personages are vast enough, but not rarified enough. They are humanities, enlarged, uplifted, transfigured—but no more. In the most spiritual of his spirits, there is a conscious, obvious, even ponderous, materialism. And hence comes the celestial gunpowder, and hence the clashing with swords, and hence the more continuous evil which we feel better than we describe, the thick atmosphere clouding the heights of the subject. And if anybody should retort, that complaining so we complain of Milton's humanity—we shake our heads. For Shakespeare also was a *man;* and our creed is, that the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' displays more of the fairyhood of fairies, than the 'Paradise Lost' does of

the angelhood of angels. The example may serve the purpose of explaining our objection; both leaving us room for the one remark more—that Ben Jonson and John Milton, the most scholastic of our poets, brought out of their scholarship different gifts to our language; that Jonson brought more Greek, and Milton more Latin: while the influences of the latter and greater poet were at once more slowly and more extensively effectual.

Butler was the contemporary of Milton: we confess a sort of continuous "innocent surprise" in the thought of it, however the craziness of our imagination may be in fault. We have stood by as witnesses while the great poet sanctified the visible earth with the oracle of his blindness; and are startled that a profane voice should be hardy enough to break the echo, and jest in the new consecrated temple. But this is rather a roundheaded than a longheaded way of adverting to poor Butler; who, for all his gross injustice to the purer religionists, in the course of "flattering the vices and daubing the iniquities" of King Charles's court, does scarcely deserve at our hands either to be treated as a poet or punished for being a contemporary of the poet Milton. Butler's business was the business of desecration, the exact reverse of a poet's; and by the admission of all the world his business is well done. His learning is various and extensive, and his fancy communicates to it its mobility. His wit has a gesture of authority, as

if it might, if it pleased, be wisdom. His power over language, "tattered and ragged" like Skelton's, is as wonderful as his power over images. And if nobody can commend the design of his 'Hudibras,' which is the English counterpart of Don Quixote,—a more objectionable servility than an adaptation from a serious composition, in which case that humorous effect would have been increased by the travestie, which is actually injured and precisely in an inverse ratio, by the burlesque copy of the burlesque,—everybody must admit the force of the execution. When Prior attempted afterwards the same line of composition with his peculiar grace and airiness of diction,—when Swift ground society into jests with a rougher turning of the wheel,—still, then and since, has this Butler stood alone. He is the genius of his class; a natural enemy to poetry under the form of a poet: not a great man, but a powerful man.

We return to the generation of Dryden and to Pope his inheritor—Pope, the perfecter, as we have already taken occasion to call him—who stood in the presence of his father Dryden, before that energetic soul, weary with its long literary work which was not always clean and noble, had uttered its last wisdom or foolishness through the organs of the body. Unfortunately, Pope had his advisers apart from his muses; and their counsel was "be correct." To be correct, therefore, to be great through correctness, was the end of his ambition, an inspiration scarcely

more calculated for the production of noble poems than the philosophy of utilitarianism is for that of lofty virtues. Yet correctness seemed a virtue rare in the land; Dr. Johnson having crowned Lord Roscommon over Shakespeare's head, "the only correct writer before Addison." The same critic predicated of Milton, that he could not cut figures upon cherrystones. Pope glorified correctness, and dedicated himself to cherrystones from first to last. A cherrystone was the apple of his eye.

Now we are not about to take up any popular cry against Pope; he has been overpraised and is underpraised; and, in the silence of our poetical experience, ourselves may confess personally to the guiltiness of either extremity. He was not a great poet; he meant to be a correct poet, and he was what he meant to be, according to his construction of the thing meant: there are few amongst us who fulfil so literally their ambitions. Moreover we will admit to our reader in the confessional, that, however convinced in our innermost opinion of the superiority of Dryden's genius, we have more pleasure in reading Pope than we ever could enjoy or imagine under Pope's master. We incline to believe that Dryden, being the greatest poet-power, Pope is the best poet-manual; and that whatever Dryden has done—we do not say conceived, we do not say suggested, but *done* —Pope has done that thing better. For translations, we hold up Pope's Homer against Dryden's Virgil

and the world. Both translations are utterly and equally contrary to the antique, both bad with the same sort of excellence; but Pope's faults are Dryden's faults, while Dryden's are not Pope's. We say the like of the poems from Chaucer; we say the like of the philosophic and satirical poems; the art of reasoning in verse is admirably attained by either poet, but practised with more grace and point by the later one. To be sure, there is the 'Alexander's Feast' ode, called until people half believed what they said, the greatest ode in the language! But here is, to make the scales even again, the 'Eloisa,' with tears on it,—faulty but tender—of a sensibility which glorious John was not born with a heart for. To be sure, it was not necessary that John Dryden should keep a Bolingbroke to think for him: but to be sure again, it is something to be born with a heart, particularly for a poet. We recognise besides in Pope, a delicate fineness of tact, of which the precise contrary is unpleasantly obvious in his great master; Horace Walpole's description of Selwyn, *une bête inspirée*, with a restriction of *bête* to the animal sense, fitting glorious John like his crown. Now there is nothing of this coarseness of the senses about Pope; the little pale Queen Anne's valetudinarian had a nature fine enough to stand erect upon the point of a needle like a schoolman's angel; and whatever he wrote coarsely, he did not write from inward impulse, but from external conventionality, from a bad social Swift-

sympathy. For the rest, he carries out his master's principles into most excellent and delicate perfection: he is rich in his degree. And there is, indeed, something charming even to an enemy's ear in this exquisite balancing of sounds and phrases, these "shining rows" of oppositions and appositions, this glorifying of commonplaces by antithetic processes, this catching, in the rebound, of emphasis upon rhyme and rhyme; all, in short, of this Indian jugglery and Indian carving upon—cherrystones! "and she herself" (that is, poetry)—

And she herself one fair Antithesis.

When Voltaire threw his 'Henriade' into the fire and Hénault rescued it, "Souvenez-vous," said the president to the poet, "that I burnt my lace ruffles for the sake of your epic." It was about as much as the epic was worth. For our own part, we would sacrifice not only our point, but the prosperity of our very fingers, to save, from a similar catastrophe, these works of Pope; and this, although the most perfect and original of all of them, 'The Rape of the Lock,' had its fortune in a fire-safe. They are the works of a master. A great poet? oh no! A true poet?—perhaps not. Yet a man, be it remembered, of such mixed gracefulness and power, that Lady Mary Wortley deigned to coquet with him, and Dennis shook before him in his shoes.

Nature, as we have observed, had been expelled by

a fork, under the hand of Pope's progenitors; and if in him and around him we see no sign of her return, we do not blame Pope for what is, both in spirit and in form, the sin of his school. Still less would we "play at bowles" with Byron, and praise his right use of the right poetry of Art. Our views of Nature and of Art have been sufficiently explained to leave our opinion obvious of the controversy in question, in which, as in a domestic broil, "there were faults on both sides." Let a poet never write the words "tree," "hill," "river," and he may still be true to nature. Most untrue, on the other hand, most narrow, is the poetical sectarianism, and essentially most unpoetical, which stands among the woods and fields announcing with didactic phlegm, "Here only is nature." Nature is where God is. Poetry is where God is. Can you go up or down or around, and not find Him? In the loudest hum of your machinery, in the dunnest volume of your steam, in the foulest street of your city,—there, as surely as in the Brocken pinewoods, and the watery thunders of Niagara,—there, as surely as He is above all, lie Nature and Poetry in full life. Speak, and they will answer! Nature is a large meaning: let us make room for it in the comprehension of our love!—for the coral rock built up by the insect and the marble column erected by the man.

In this age of England, however, pet-named the Augustan, there was no room either for Nature or

Art: Art and Nature (for we will separate their names) were at least maimed and dejected and sickening day by day—

> Quoth she, I grieve to see your leg
> Stuck in a hole here, like a peg;

and even so, or like the peg of a top humming drowsily, our poetry stood still. There was an abundance of "correct writers," yes, and of "elegant writers:" there was Parnell, for instance, who would be called besides, a pleasing writer by any pleasing critic; and Addison, a proverb for the "virtuousest, discreetest, best" with all the world. Or if, after the Scotch mode of Monkbarns, we call our poets by their possessions, not so wronging their characteristics, there was 'The Dispensary,' the 'Art of Preserving Health,' the 'Art of Cookery,'—and 'Trivia,' or the 'Fan,'—take Gay by either of those names! and 'Cider,' or the 'Splendid Shilling'—take Phillips, Milton's imitator, by either of these! and there was Pomfret, not our "choice," the concentrate essence of namby-pamby-ism; and Prior, a brother spirit of the French Gresset,—a half-brother, of an inferior race, yet to be praised by us for one instinct obvious in him, a blind stretching of the hand to a sweeter order of versification than was current. Of Young we could write much: he was the very genius of antithesis; a genius breaking from "the system," with its broken chain upon his limbs, and frowning darkly through the grey

monotony; a grander writer by spasms than by volitions. Blair was of his class, but rougher; a brawny contemplative Orson. And how many of our readers may be unaware of the underground existence of another *Excursion* than the deathless one of our days, and in blank verse, too, and in several cantos; and how nobody will thank us for digging at these fossil remains! It is better to remember Mallet by his touching ballad of the 'William and Margaret,' a word taken from diviner lips to becoming purpose; only we must not be thrown back upon the 'Ballads,' lest we wish to live with them for ever. Our literature is rich in ballads, a form epitomical of the epic and dramatic, and often vocal when no other music is astir; and to give a particular account of which would take us far across our borders.

As it is, we are across them; we are benighted in our wandering and straitened for room. We glance back vainly to the lights of the later drama, and see Dryden, who had the heart to write rhymed plays after Shakespeare, and but little heart for anything else,—and Congreve, and Lillo, and Southerne, and Rowe, all gifted writers, and Otway, master of tears, who starved in our streets for his last tragedy—a poet most effective in broad touches; rather moving, as it appears to us, by scenes than by words.

Returning to the general poets, we meet with bent faces toward hill-side Nature, Thomson and Dyer; in writing which names together, we do not depreciate

Thomson's, however we may a little exalt Dyer's. We praise neither of these writers for being descriptive poets; but for that faithful transcript of their own impressions, which is a common subject of praise in both: Dyer being more distinct, perhaps, in his images, and Thomson more impressive in his general effect. Both are faulty in their blank verse diction; the latter too florid and verbose, the former (although 'Grongar Hill' is simple almost to baldness) too pedantic and *constructive*—far too "saponaceous" and "pomaceous." We offer pastoral salutation also to Shenstone and Hammond; pairing them like Polyphemus's sheep; fain to be courteous if we could: and we could if we were 'Phillida.' Surely it is an accomplishment to utter a pretty thought so simply that the world is forced to remember it; and that gift was Shenstone's, and he the most poetical of country gentlemen. May every shrub on the lawn of Leasowes be evergreen to his brow! And next, oh most patient reader,—pressed to a conclusion and in a pairing humour, we come to Gray and Akenside together, yes, together! because if Gray had written a philosophic poem he would have written it like the 'Pleasures of Imagination,' and because Akenside would have written odes like Gray, if he could have commanded a rapture. Gray, studious and sitting in the cold, learnt the secret of a simulated and innocent fire (the Greek fire he might have *called* it), which burns beautifully to the eye, but never would have harmed

M. Hénault's ruffles. Collins had twenty times the lyric genius of Gray; we feel his fire in our cheeks. But Gray, like Akenside—both with a volition towards enthusiasm—have an under-constitution of most scholastic coldness: "Si vis me flere," you must weep; but they only take out their pocket-handkerchiefs. We confess humbly, before gods and men, that we never read to the end of Akenside's 'Pleasures,' albeit we have read Plato: some pleasures, say the moralists, are more trying than pains. Let us turn for refreshment to Goldsmith—that amiable genius, upon whose diadem we feel our hands laid ever and anon in familiar love,—to Goldsmith, half emerged from "the system," his forehead touched with the red ray of the morning; a cordial singer. Even Johnson, the ponderous critic of the system, who would hang a dog if he read 'Lycidas' twice, who wrote the lives of the poets and left out the poets, even he loved Goldsmith! and Johnson was Dryden's critical bear, a rough bear, and with points of noble beardom. But while he growled the leaves of the greenwood fell; and oh, how sick to faintness grew the poetry of England! Anna Seward "by'r lady," was the "muse" of those days, and Mr. Hayley "the bard," and Hannah More wrote our dramas, and Helen Williams our odes, and Rosa Matilda our elegiacs,—and Blacklock, blind from his birth, our descriptive poems, and Mr. Whalley our "domestic epics," and Darwin our poetical philosophy, and Lady

Millar encouraged literature at Bath, with red taffeta and "the vase." But the immortal are threatened vainly. It was the sickness of renewal rather than of death; St. Leon had his fainting hand on the elixir: the new era was alive in Cowper. We do not speak of him as the master of a transition, only as a hinge on which it slowly turned; only as an earnest tender writer, and true poet enough to be true to himself. Cowper sang in England, and Thomas Warton also,—of a weaker voice but in tune: and Beattie, for whom we have too much love to analyse it, seeing that we drew our childhood's first poetic pleasure from his 'Minstrel.' And Burns walked in glory on the Scottish mountain's side: and everywhere Dr Percy's collected ballads were sowing the great hearts of some still living for praise, with impulses of greatness. It was the revival of poetry, the opening of the fifth era, the putting down of the Dryden dynasty, the breaking of the serf bondage, the wrenching of the iron from the soul. And Nature and Poetry did embrace one another! and all men who were lovers of either and of our beloved England, were enabled to resume the pride of their consciousness, and looking round the world say gently, yet gladly, "Our Poets."

When Mr. Wordsworth gave his first poems to the public, it was not well with poetry in England. The "system" riveted upon the motions of poetry by Dryden and his dynasty had gradually added to

the restraint of slavery, its weakness and emasculation. The change from poetry to rhetoric had issued in another change, to the commonplaces of rhetoric. We had no longer to complain of Pope's antithetic glories: there was "a vile antithesis" for those also. The followers were not as the master; and the very facility with which the trick of acoustical mechanics was caught up by the former—admitting of "singing for the million," with ten fingers each for natural endowment, and the ability to count them for requirement,—made wider and more apparent the difference of dignity between the Popes and the Pope Joans. Little by little, by slow and desolate degrees, Thought had perished out of the way of the appointed and most beaten rhythm; and we had the beaten rhythm, without the living footstep—we had the monotony of the military movement, without the heroic impulse—the cross of the Legion of Honour, hung, as it once was, in a paroxysm of converted Bourbonism, at a horse's tail; and the "fork," which expelled nature, dropped feebly downward, blunted of its point. And oh! to see who sat then in England, in the seats of the elders! The Elizabethan men would have gnashed their teeth at such a sight; the Queen Anne's men would have multiplied Dunciads. Of the third George's men (Αχαιΐδες ουκ ετ' Αχαιοι) Hayley, too good a scholar to bear to be so bad a poet, was a chief hope,—and Darwin, mistaker of the optic nerve for the poetical sense, an inventive genius.

But Cowper had a great name, and Burns a greater; and the *réveillé* of Dr. Percy's 'Reliques of English Poetry' was echoed presently by the 'Scottish Minstrelsy.' There was a change, a revival, an awakening, a turning, at least upon the pillow, of some who slept on in mediocrity, as if they felt the daylight on their shut eyelids: there was even a group of noble hearts (Coleridge, the idealist, poet among poets, in their midst), foreseeing the sun. Nature, the long banished, re-dawned like the morning: Nature, the true mother, cried afar off to her children, "Children, I am here! come to me." It was a hard act to come, and involved the learning and the leaving of much. Conventionalities of phrase and rhythm, conventional dialects set apart for poets, conventional words, attitudes, and manners, consecrated by "wits,"—all such Nessian trappings were to be wrenched off, even to the cuticle into which they had urged their poison. But it was an act not too hard for the doing. There was a visible movement towards nature; the majority moving of course with reservation, but individuals with decision; some rending downward their garments of pestilent embroidery, and casting themselves at her feet. As the chief of the movement, the Xenophon of the return, we are bound to acknowledge this great Wordsworth, and to admire how, in a bravery bravest of all because born of love, in a passionate unreservedness sprung of genius, and to the actual scandal of the world which stared at

the filial familiarity, he threw himself not at the feet of Nature, but straightway and right tenderly upon her bosom. And so, trustfully as child before mother, self-renouncingly as child after sin, absorbed away from the consideration of publics and critics as child at playhours, with a simplicity startling to the *blasé* critical ear as inventiveness, with an innocent utterance felt by the competent thinker to be wisdom, and with a faithfulness to natural impressions acknowledged since by all to be the highest art,—this William Wordsworth did sing his 'Lyrical Ballads' where the 'Art of criticism' had been sung before, and "the world would not let them die."

The voice of nature has a sweetness which few of us, when sufficiently tried, can gainsay; it penetrates our artificial "tastes," and overcomes us; and our ignorance seldom proves strong, in proportion to our instincts. We recognize, like Ulysses' dog, with feeble joyous gesture the master's voice: and the sound is nearly always pleasant to us, however we may want strength to follow after it. But, while at the period we refer to, the recognition and gratulation were true and deep, the old conventionalities and prejudices hung heavily in bondage and repression. The great body of readers would recoil to the Drydenic rhythm, to the Queen Anne's poetical cant, to anti-Saxonisms whether in Latin or French; or exacted as a condition of a poet's faithfulness to nature, such an effervescence of his emotions, as had

rendered Pope natural in the Eloisa. "Let us all forsooth be Eloisa and so natural,"—the want was an excuse for loving nature; and the opinion went, that the daily heart-beat was more obnoxious in poetry than the incidental palpitation. Poor Byron (true miserable genius, soul-blind great poet!) ministered to this singular need, identifying poetry and passion. Poetry ought to be the revelation of the complete man—and Byron's manhood having no completion nor entirety, consisting on the contrary of a one-sided passionateness, his poems discovered not a heart, but the wound of a heart; not humanity, but disease; not life, but a crisis. It was not so—it was not in the projection of a passionate emotion, that William Wordsworth committed himself to nature, but in full resolution and determinate purpose. He is scarcely, perhaps, of a passionate temperament, although still less is he cold; rather quiet in his love, as the stockdove, and brooding over it as constantly, and with as soft an inward song lapsing outwardly—serene through deepness—saying himself of his thoughts, that they "do often lie too deep for tears;" which does not mean that their painfulness will not suffer them to be wept for, but that their closeness to the supreme Truth hallows them, like the cheek of an archangel, from tears. Call him the very opposite of Byron, who, with narrower sympathies for the crowd, yet stood nearer to the crowd, because everybody understands passion. Byron was

a poet through pain. Wordsworth is a feeling man, because he is a thoughtful man; he knows grief itself by a reflex emotion; by sympathy, rather than by suffering. He is eminently and humanly expansive; and, spreading his infinite egotism over all the objects of his contemplation, reiterates the love, life, and poetry of his peculiar being in transcribing and chanting the material universe, and so sinks a broad gulf between his descriptive poetry and that of the Darwinian painter-poet school. Darwin was, as we have intimated, all optic nerve. Wordsworth's eye is his soul. He does not see that which he does not intellectually discern, and he beholds his own cloud-capped Helvellyn under the same conditions with which he would contemplate a grand spiritual abstraction. In his view of the exterior world,—as in a human Spinozism,—mountains and men's hearts share in a sublime unity of humanity; yet his Spinozism does in nowise affront God, for he is eminently a religious poet, if not, indeed, altogether as generous and capacious in his Christianity as in his poetry; and, being a true Christian poet, he is scarcely least so when he is not writing directly upon the subject of religion; just as we learn sometimes without looking up, and, by the mere colour of the grass, that the sky is cloudless. But what is most remarkable in this great writer is, his poetical consistency. There is a wonderful unity in these multiform poems of one man; they are "bound each to each in natural piety,"

even as his days are: and why? because they *are* his days—all his days, work days and Sabbath days—his life, in fact, and not the unconnected works of his life, as vulgar men do opine of poetry and do rightly opine of vulgar poems, but the sign, seal, and representation of his life—nay, the actual audible breathing of his inward spirit's life. When Milton said that a poet's life should be a poem, he spoke a high moral truth; if he had added a reversion of the saying, that a poet's poetry should be his life,—he would have spoken a critical truth, not low.

"Foole, saide my muse to mee, looke in thine hearte and write,"—and not only, we must repeat, at feast times, fast times, or curfew times—not only at times of crisis and emotion, but at all hours of the clock; for that which God thought good enough to write, or permit the writing of on His book, the heart, is not too common, let us be sure, to write again in the best of our poems. William Wordsworth wrote these common things of nature, and by no means in a phraseology nor in a style. He was daring in his commonness as any of your Tamerlanes may be daring when far fetching an alien image from an outermost world; and, notwithstanding the ribald cry of that "vox populi" which has, in the criticism of poems, so little the character of divinity, and which loudly and mockingly, at his first utterance, denied the sanctity of his simplicities,—the Nature he was faithful to "betrayed not the heart which loved her," but,

finally, justifying herself and him, "DID"—without the 'Edinburgh Review.'

"Hero-worshippers," as we are, and sitting for all the critical pretence—in right or wrong of which we speak at all—at the feet of Mr. Wordsworth,—recognizing him, as we do, as poet-hero of a movement essential to the better being of poetry, as poet-prophet of utterances greater than those who first listened could comprehend, and of influences most vital and expansive—we are yet honest to confess that certain things in the 'Lyrical Ballads' which most provoked the ignorant innocent hootings of the mob, do not seem to us all heroic. Love, like ambition, may overvault itself; and Betty Foys of the Lake school (so called) may be as subject to conventionalities as Pope's Lady Bettys. And, perhaps, our great poet might, through the very vehemence and nobleness of his hero and prophet-work for nature, confound, for some blind moment, and by an association easily traced and excused, nature with rusticity, the simple with the bald; and even fall into a vulgar conventionality in the act of spurning a graceful one. If a trace of such confounding may occasionally be perceived in Mr. Wordsworth's earlier poetry, few critics are mad enough, to-day, to catch at the loose straws of the full golden sheaf and deck out withal their own arrogant fronts, in the course of mouthing mocks at the poet. The veriest critic of straw knoweth well, at this hour of the day, that if Mr.

Wordsworth was ever over-rustic, it was not through incapacity to be right royal; that of all poets, indeed, who have been kings in England, not one has swept the purple with more majesty than this poet, when it hath pleased him to be majestic. *Vivat rex*,—and here is a new volume of his reign. Let us rejoice, for the sake of literature and the age, in the popularity which is ready for it, and in the singular happiness of a great poet living long enough to rebound from the "fell swoop" of his poetical destiny, survive the ignorance of his public, and convict the prejudices of his reviewers. It is a literal "poetical justice," and one rarest of all, that a great poet should stand in a permitted sovereignty, without doing so, like poor Inez de Castro, by right of death. It is almost wonderful that his country should clap her hands in praise of him, before he has ceased to hear: the applause resembles an anachronism. Is Mr. Wordsworth startled at receiving from his contemporaries what he expected only from posterity?—is he asking himself, "Have I done anything wrong?" Probably not: it is at least with his usual air of calm and advised dignity that he addresses his new volume in its *Envoy*:

> Go single,—yet aspiring to be joined
> With thy forerunners, that through many a year
> Have faithfully prepared each other's way—
> Go forth upon a mission best fulfilled
> When and wherever, in this changeful world,
> *Power hath been given to please for higher ends*
> *Than pleasure only*; gladdening to prepare

> For wholesome sadness, troubling to refine,
> Calming to raise.

—words of the poet, which form a nobler description of the character and uses of his poetry, than could be given in any words of a critic.

We do not say that the finest of Mr. Wordsworth's productions are to be found or should be looked for in the present volume; but the volume is worthy of its forerunners, consistent in noble earnestness and serene philosophy, true poet's work,—the hand trembling not a jot for years or weariness,—the full face of the soul turned hopefully and stilly as ever towards the True, and catching across its ridge the idealized sunlight of the Beautiful. And yet if we were recording angel, instead of only recording reviewer, we should drop a tear—another—and end by weeping out that series of sonnets in favour of capital punishments,—moved that a hand which has traced *life*-warrants so long for the literature of England, should thus sign a misplaced "Benedicite" over the hangman and his victim. We turn away from them to other sonnets—to forget aught in Mr. Wordsworth's poetry we must turn to his poetry:—and however the greatest poets of our country,—the Shakespeares, Spensers, Miltons,—worked upon high sonnet-ground, not one opened over it such broad and pouring sluices of various thought, imagery, and emphatic eloquence as he has done.

The tender Palinodia is beyond Petrarch:—

Though I beheld at first with blank surprise
This work, I now have gazed on it so long,
I see its truth with unreluctant eyes;
O, my beloved! I have done thee wrong,
Conscious of blessedness, but, whence it springs
Ever too heedless, as I now perceive:
Morn into noon did pass, noon into eve,
And the old day was welcome, as the young,
As welcome and as beautiful—in sooth
More beautiful, as being a thing more holy;
Thanks to thy virtues, to the eternal youth
Of all thy goodness, never melancholy;
To thy large heart and humble mind, that cast
Into one vision, future, present, past!

That "*more beautiful*" is most beautiful: all human love's cunning is in it, besides the full glorifying smile of Christian love.

Last in the volume is the tragedy of 'The Borderers,' which having lain for some fifty years "unregarded" among its author's papers,—a singular destiny for these printing days when our very morning-talk seems to fall naturally into pica type,—caused, in its announcement from afar, the most faithful disciples to tremble for the possible failure of their master. Perhaps they trembled with cause. The master, indeed, was a prophet of humanity; but he was wiser in love than terror, in admiration than pity, and rather intensely than actively human; capacious to embrace within himself the whole nature of things and beings, but not going out of himself to embrace anything; a poet of one large sufficient soul,

but not polypsychical like a dramatist. Therefore his disciples trembled: and we will not say that the tragedy, taken as a whole, does not justify the fear. There is something grand and Greek in the intention which hinges it, showing how crime makes crime in cursed generation, and how black hearts, like whiter ones (Topaze or Ebène), do cry out and struggle for sympathy and brotherhood; granting that light heart (Oswald) may stand something too much on the extreme of evil to represent humanity broadly enough for a drama to turn upon. The action, too, although it does not, as might have been apprehended, lose itself in contemplation, has no unhesitating firm dramatic march—perhaps it "potters" a little, to take a word from Mrs. Butler;—and when all is done we look vainly within us for an impression, the response to the unity of the whole. But again, when all is done, the work is Mr. Wordsworth's, and the conceptions and utterances living and voiceful in it, bear no rare witness to the master. The old blind man, left to the ordeal of the desert—the daughter in agony hanging upon the murderer for consolation—knock against the heart, and take back answers; and ever and anon there are sweet gushings of such words as this poet only knows, showing how, in a "late remorse of love," he relapses into pastoral dreams, notwithstanding his new vocation, and within the very sight of the theatric *thymele*:—

A grove of darker and more lofty shade

I never saw. The music of the birds
Drops deadened from a roof so thick with leaves.

Who can overpass the image of the old innocent man praying?—

The name of daughter on his lips, he prays!
With nerves so steady, that the very flies
Sit unmolested on his staff.

But we come hastily to the moral of our story,—seeing that Mr. Wordsworth's life does present a high moral to his generation, to forget which in his poetry would be an unworthy compliment to the latter. It is advantageous for us all, whether poets or poetasters, or talkers about either, to know what a true poet is, what his work is, and what his patience and successes must be, so as to raise the popular idea of these things, and either strengthen or put down the individual aspiration. "Art," it was said long ago, "requires the whole man," and "Nobody," it was said later, "can be a poet who is anything else;" but the present idea of Art requires the segment of a man, and everybody who is anything at all, is a poet in a parenthesis. And our shelves groan with little books over which their readers groan less metaphorically; there is a plague of poems in the land apart from poetry; and many poets who live and are true, do not live by their truth, but hold back their full strength from Art because they do not *reverence* it fully; and all booksellers cry aloud and do not spare, that poetry will not sell; and certain critics utter melancholy

frenzies, that poetry is worn out for ever—as if the morning-star was worn out from heaven, or "the yellow primrose" from the grass; and Mr. Disraeli the younger, like Bildad comforting Job, suggests that we may content ourselves for the future with a rhythmetic prose, printed like prose for decency, and supplied, for comfort, with a parish allowance of two or three rhymes to a paragraph. Should there be any whom such a 'New Poor Law' would content, we are far from wishing to disturb the virtue of their serenity: let them continue, like the hypochondriac, to be very sure that they have lost their souls, inclusive of their poetic instincts. In the meantime the hopeful and believing will hope,—trust on; and, better still, the Tennysons and the Brownings, and other high-gifted spirits, will work, wait on, until, as Mr. Horne has said—

> Strong deeds awake,
> And clamouring, throng the portals of the hour.

It is well for them and all to count the cost of this life of a master in poetry, and learn from it what a true poet's crown is worth; to recall both the long life's work for its sake—the work of observation, of meditation, of reaching past models into nature, of reaching past nature unto God; and the early life's loss for its sake—the loss of the popular cheer, of the critical assent, and of the "money in the purse." It is well and full of exultation to remember *now* what a silent, blameless, heroic life of poetic duty, this man

has lived;—how he never cried rudely against the world because he was excluded for a time from the parsley garlands of its popularity; nor sinned morally because he was sinned against intellectually; nor, being tempted and threatened by paymaster and reviewer, swerved from the righteousness and high aims of his inexorable genius. And it cannot be ill to conclude by enforcing a high example by some noble precepts which, taken from the 'Musophilus' of old Daniel, do contain, to our mind, the very code of chivalry for poets:—

Be it that my unseasonable song
  Come out of Time, that fault is in the Time;
And I must not do virtue so much wrong
  As love her aught the worse for others' crime.
. . . . . .
And for my part, if only one allow
  The care my labouring spirits take in this,
He is to me a theatre large enow,
  And his applause only sufficient is—
All my respect is bent but to his brow
  That is my all, and all I am is his.
And if some worthy spirits be pleased too,
  It shall more comfort breed, but not more will,
BUT WHAT IF NONE? *It cannot yet undo*
  The love I bear unto this holy skill:
This is the thing that I was born to do,
  This is my scene, this part must I fulfil.

THE END.


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